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(54) **ARTICULATING DRILL WITH INTEGRATED CIRCUIT BOARD AND METHOD OF OPERATION**

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(51) **Int. Cl.**
B23B 45/02 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **173/1; 173/2; 173/18; 173/217; 173/170**

(58) **Field of Classification Search** **173/1, 2; 318/432**

See application file for complete search history.

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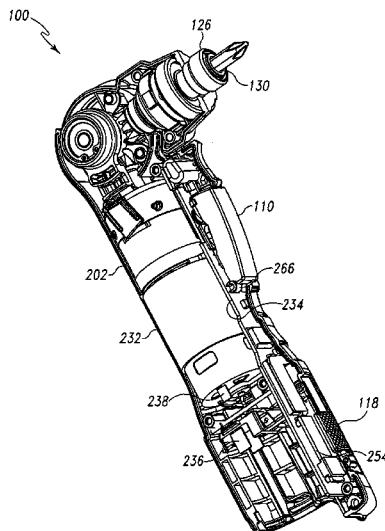
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

The present invention is an articulating hand power tool with a main housing having a longitudinal axis, a head portion rotatably engaged with the main housing for placement at a plurality of angles with respect to the longitudinal axis of the main housing, an integrated circuit board located within the main housing and at least one controller accessible from outside of the main housing for controlling the integrated circuit board.

23 Claims, 19 Drawing Sheets



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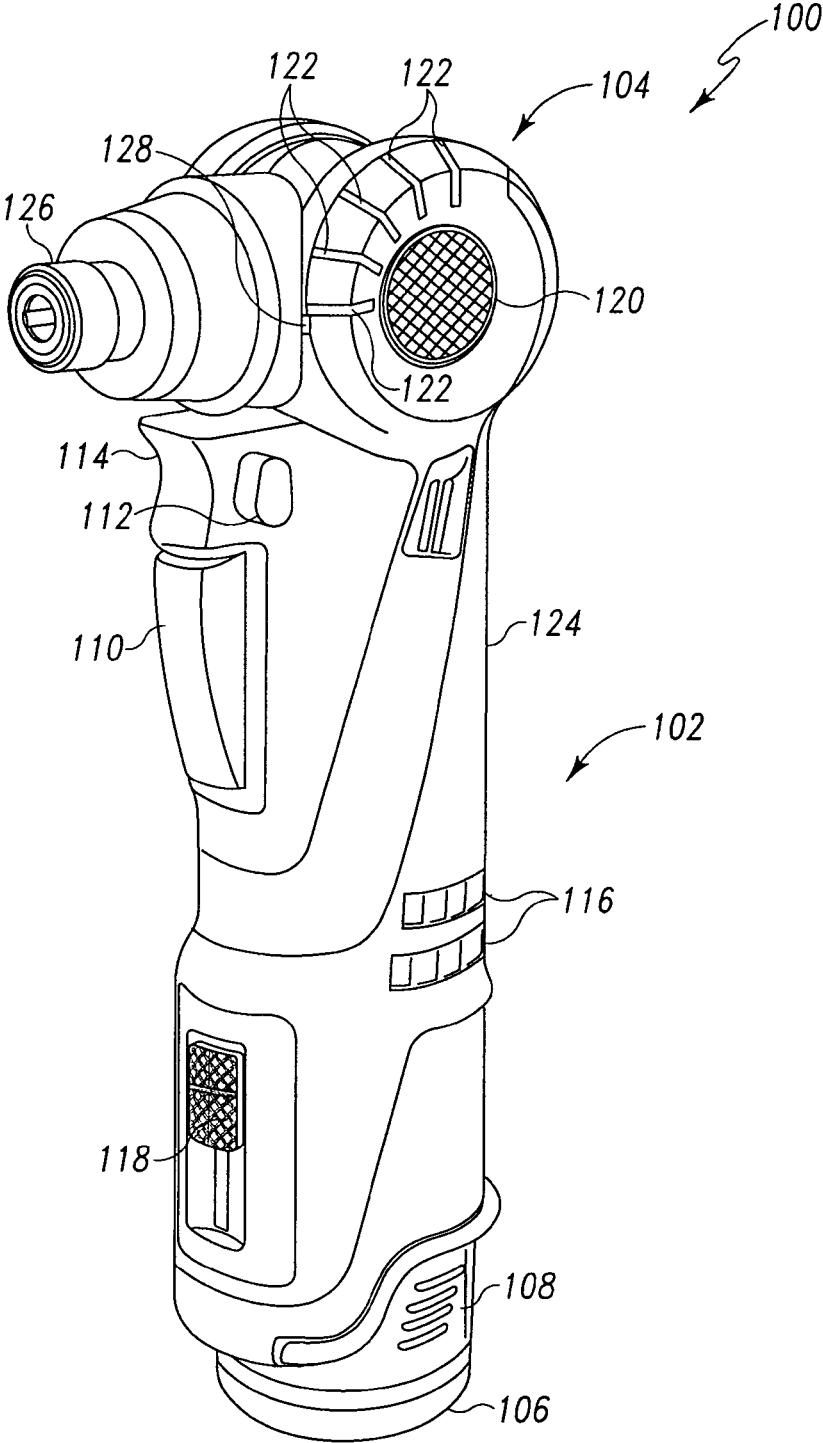


Fig. 1

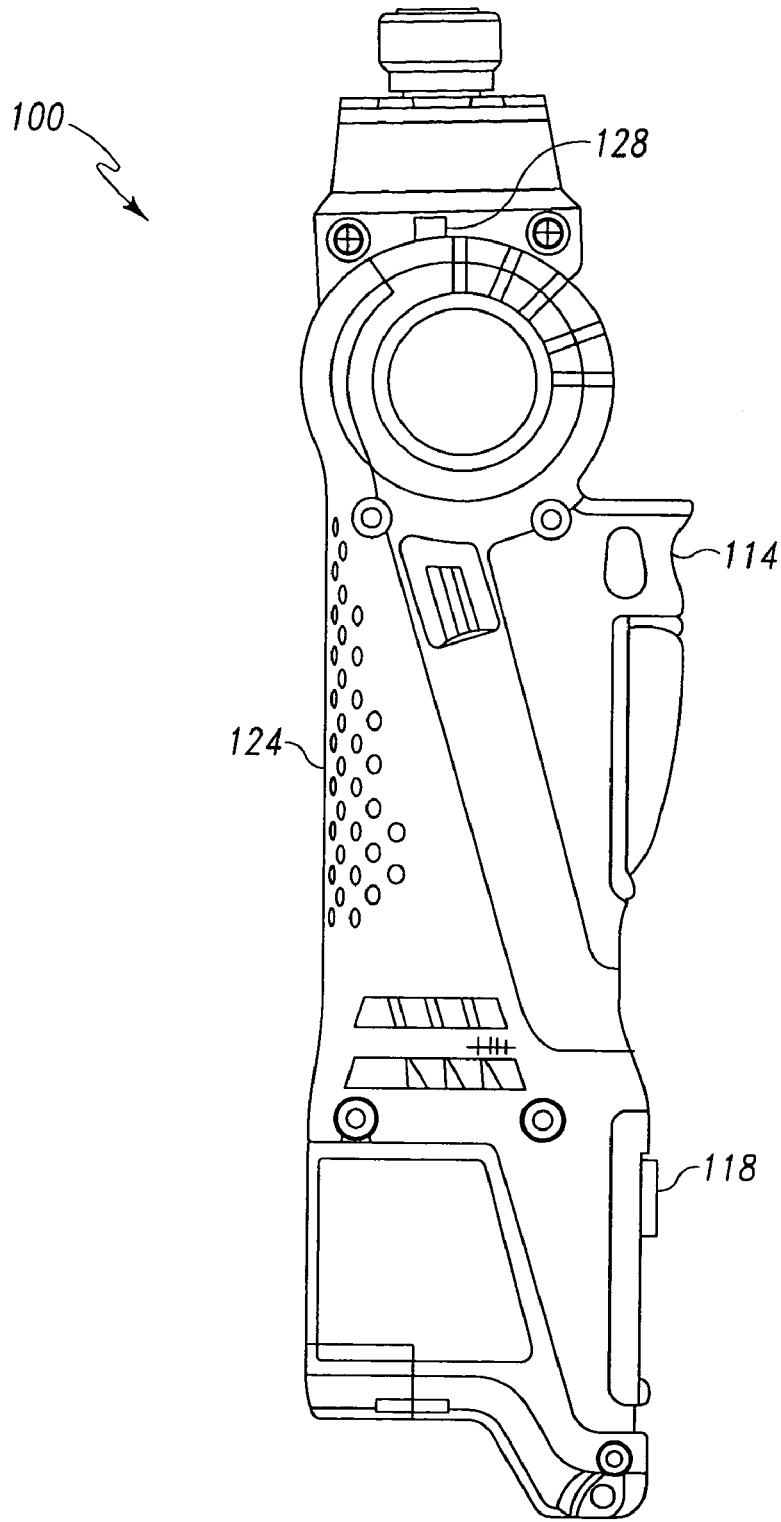


Fig. 2

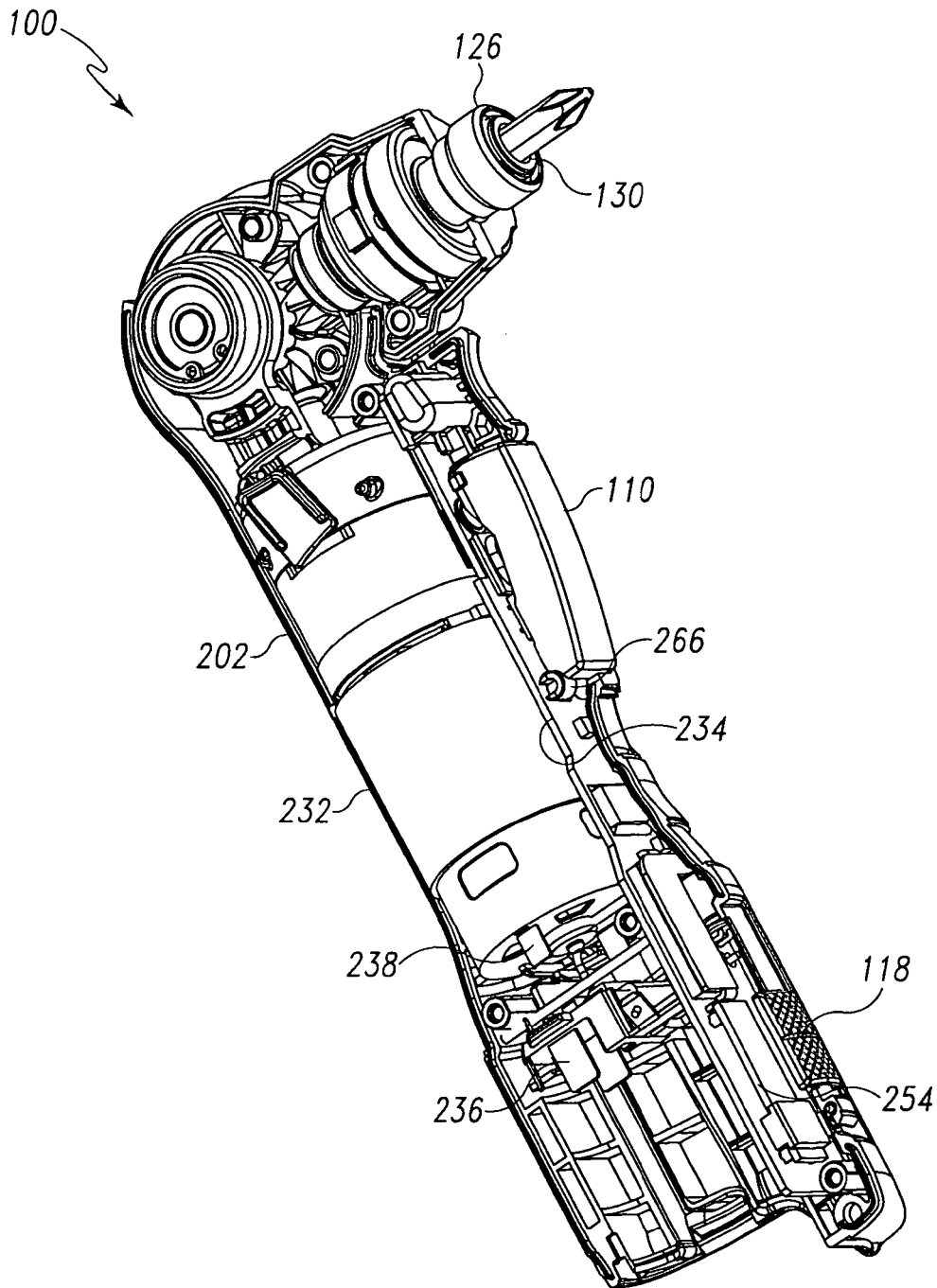


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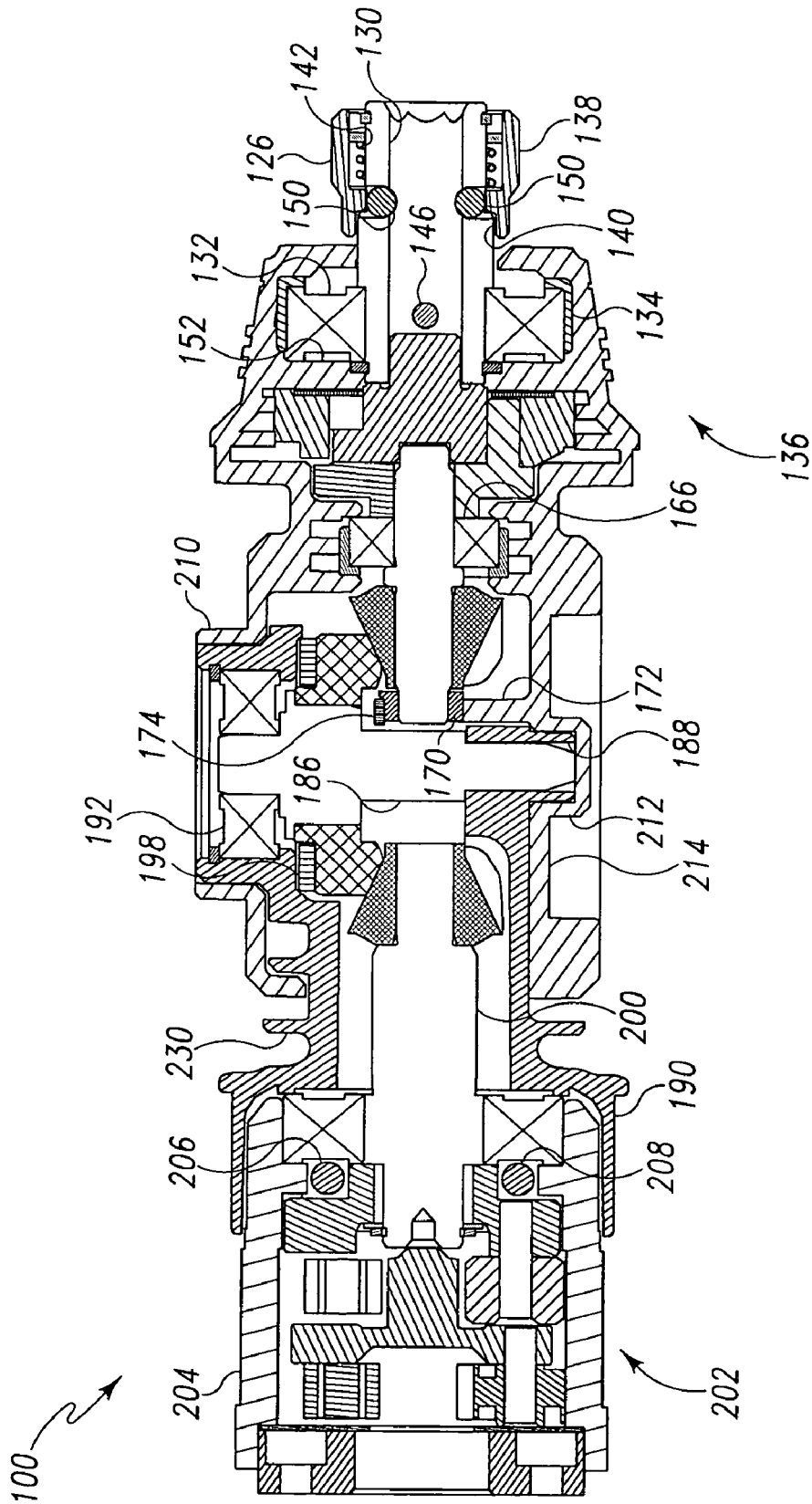


Fig. 4

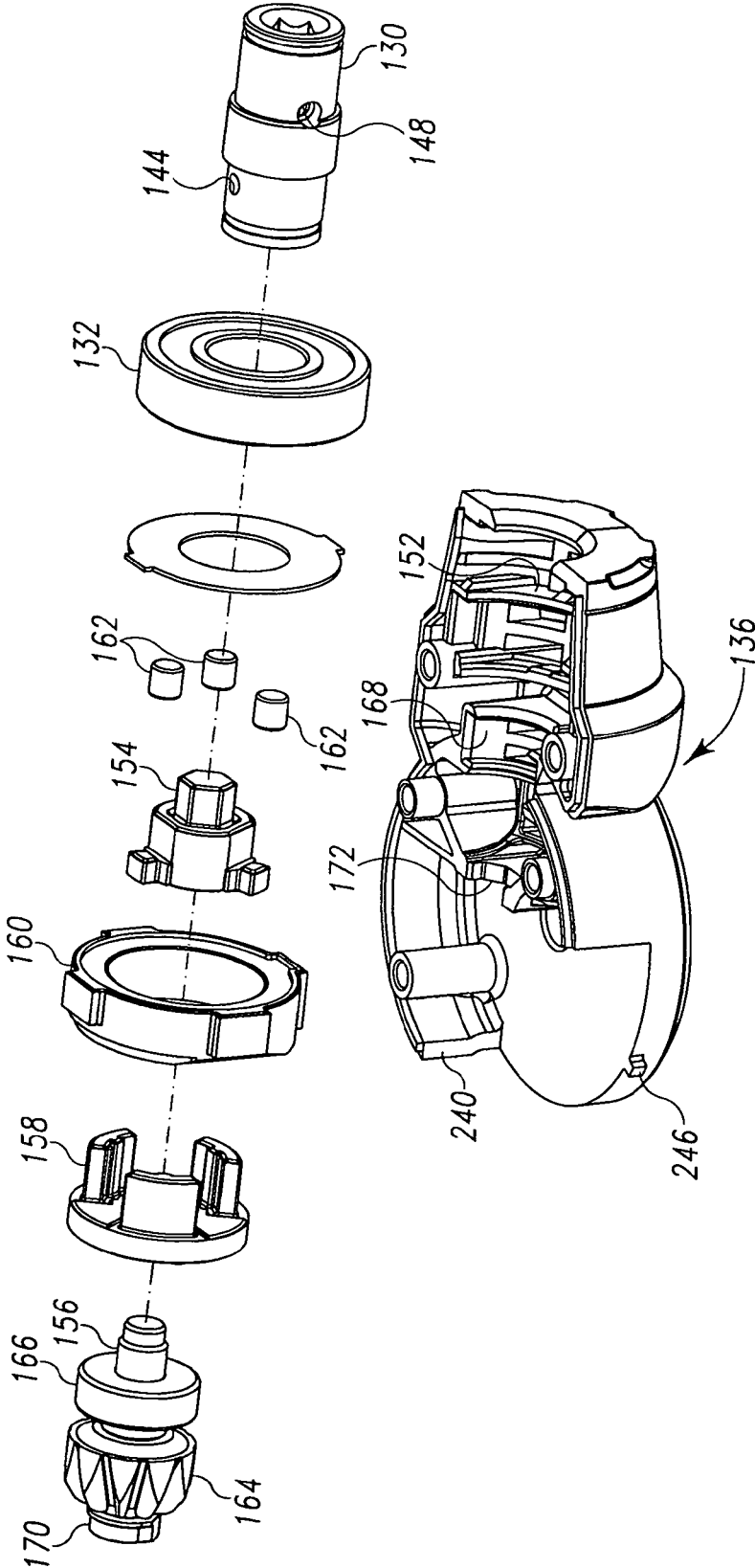


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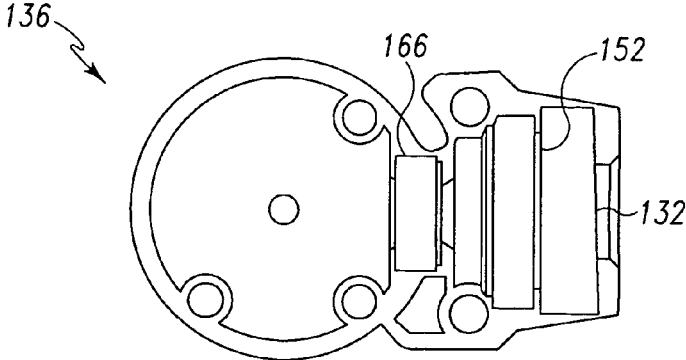


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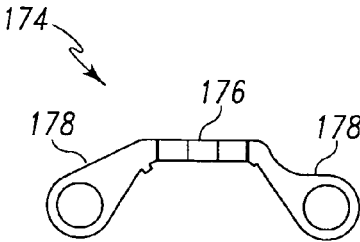


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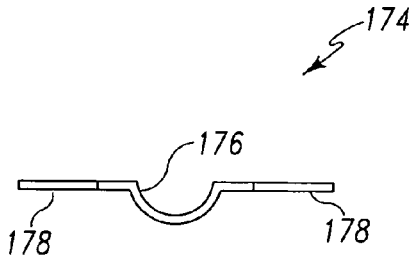


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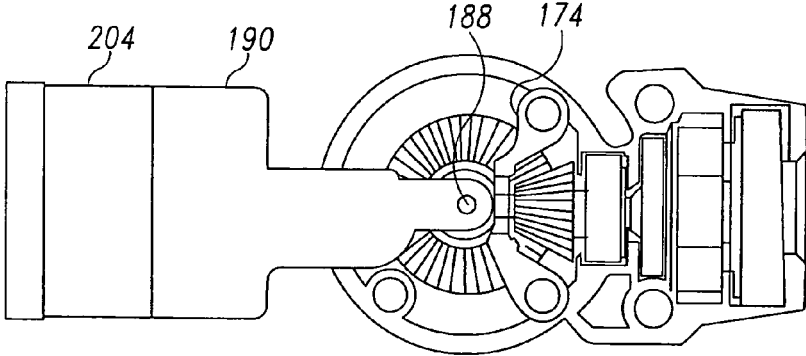


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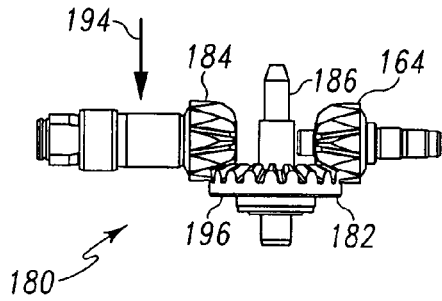


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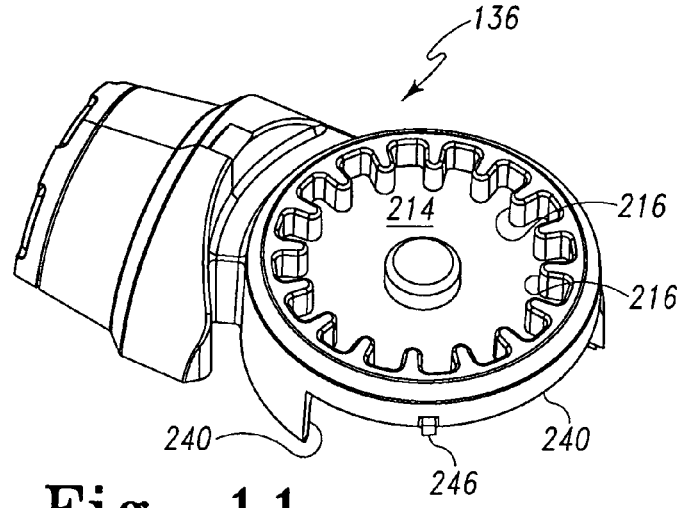


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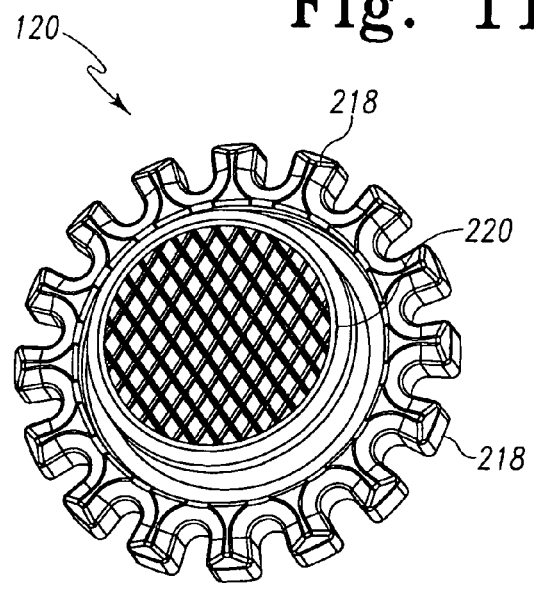


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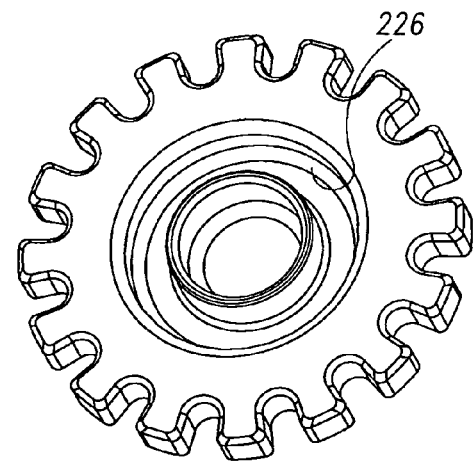


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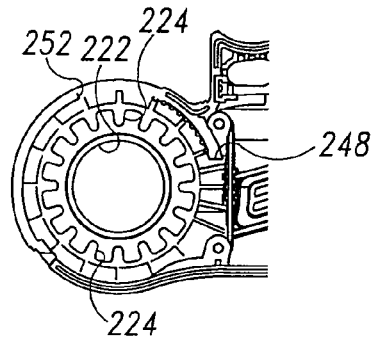


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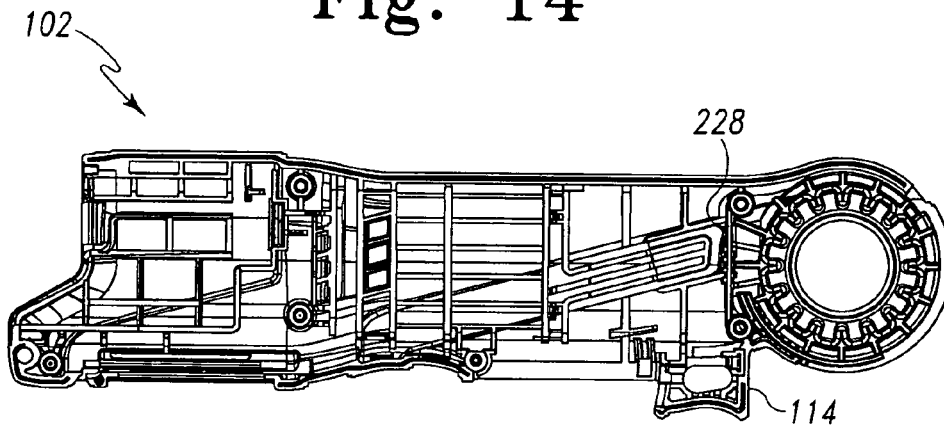


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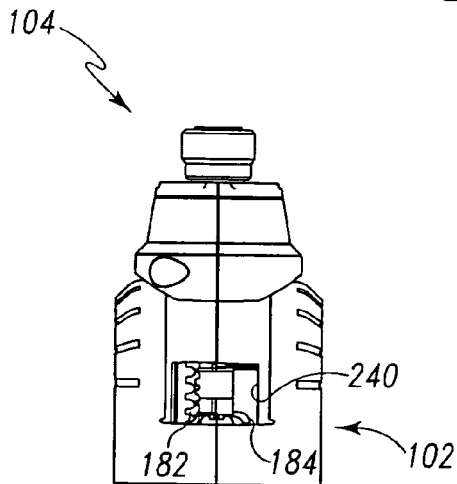


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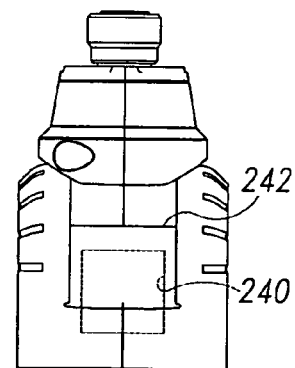


Fig. 17

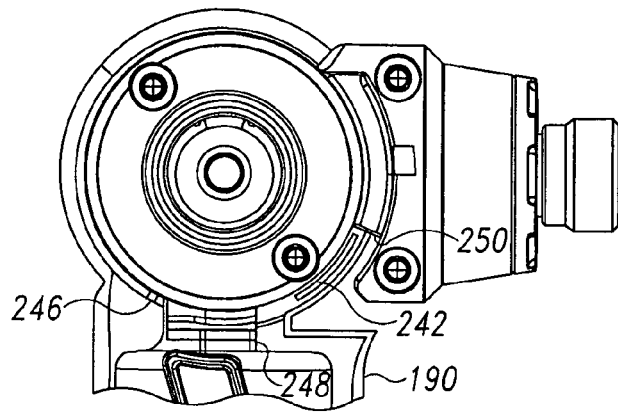


Fig. 18

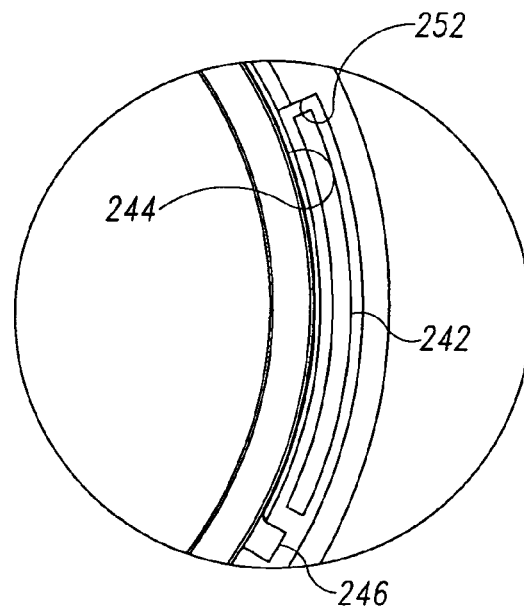


Fig. 20

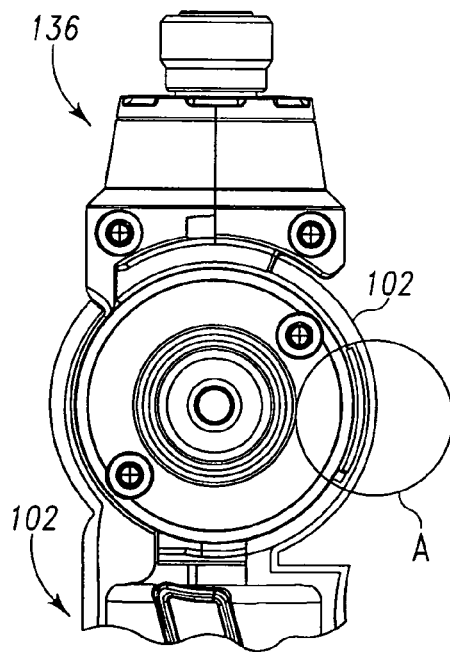


Fig. 19

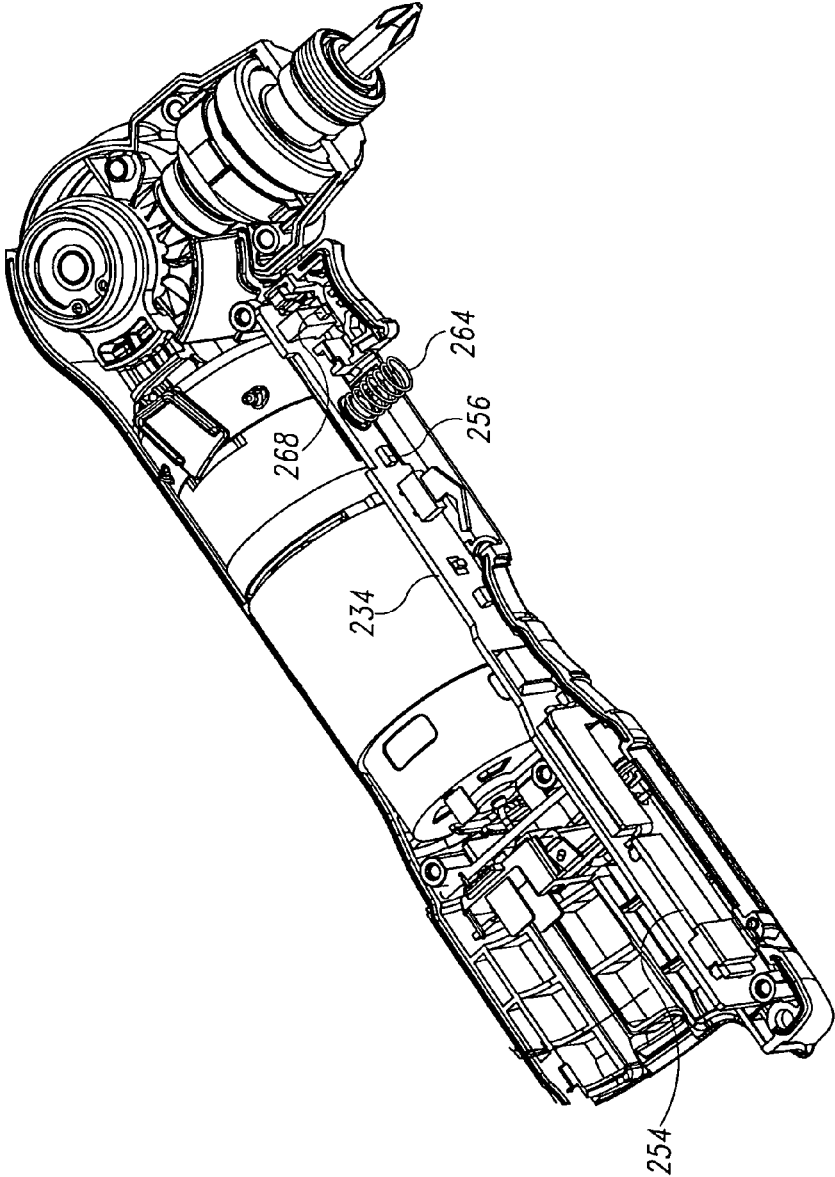


Fig. 21

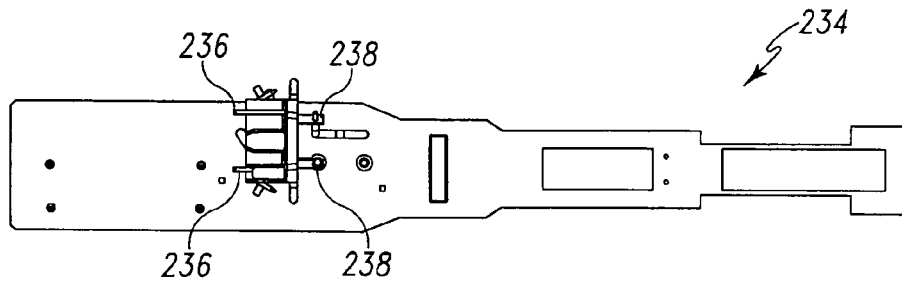


Fig. 22A

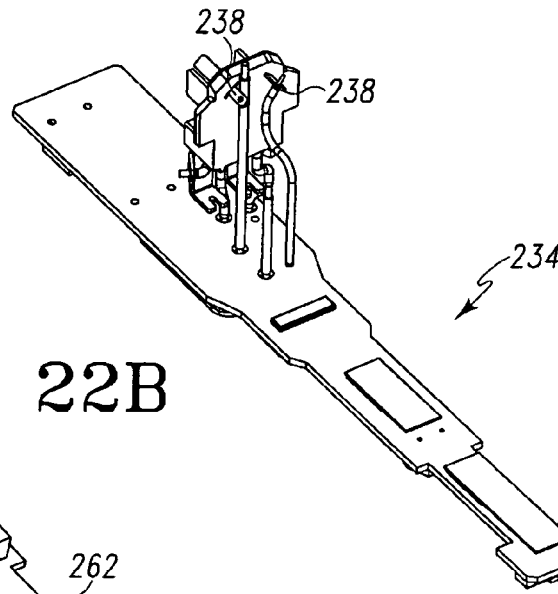


Fig. 22B

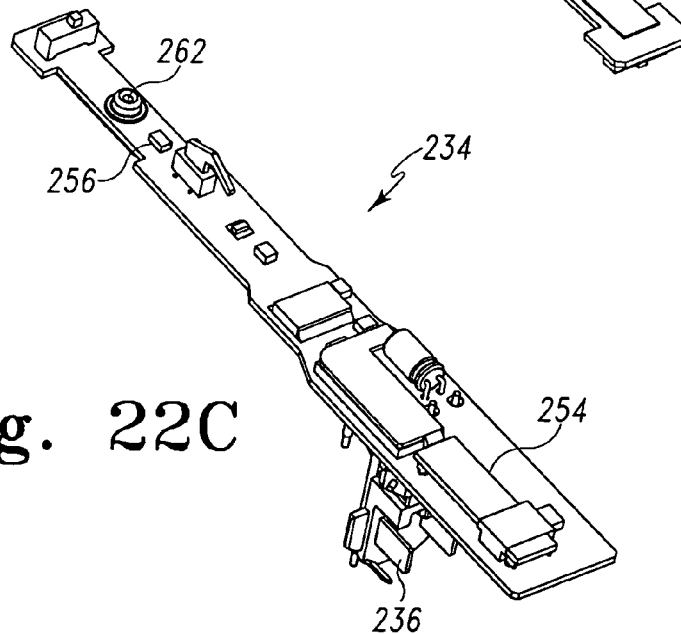


Fig. 22C

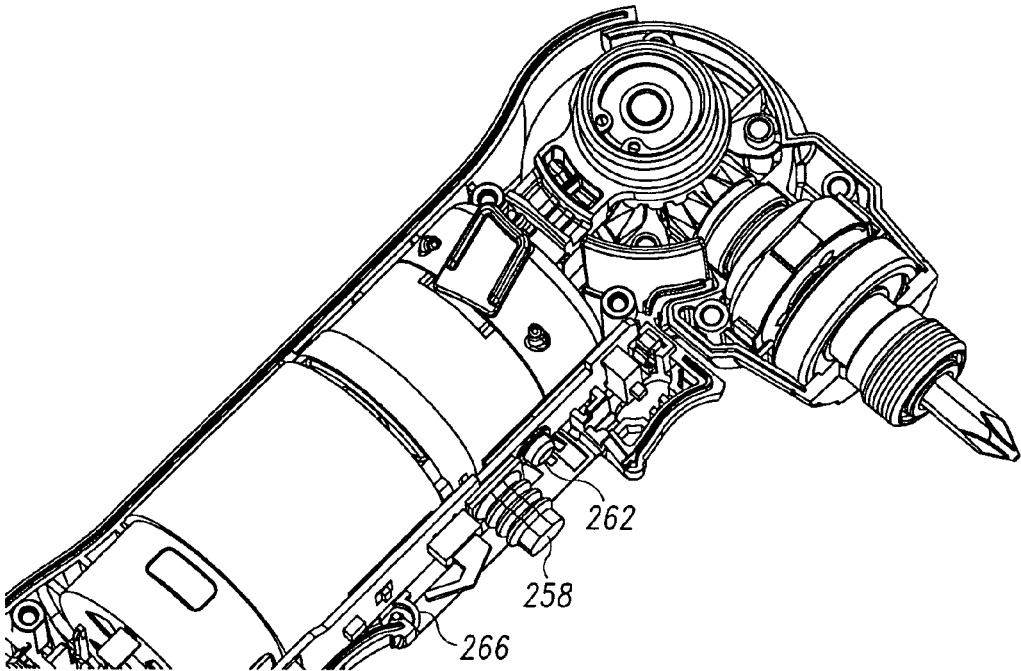


Fig. 23

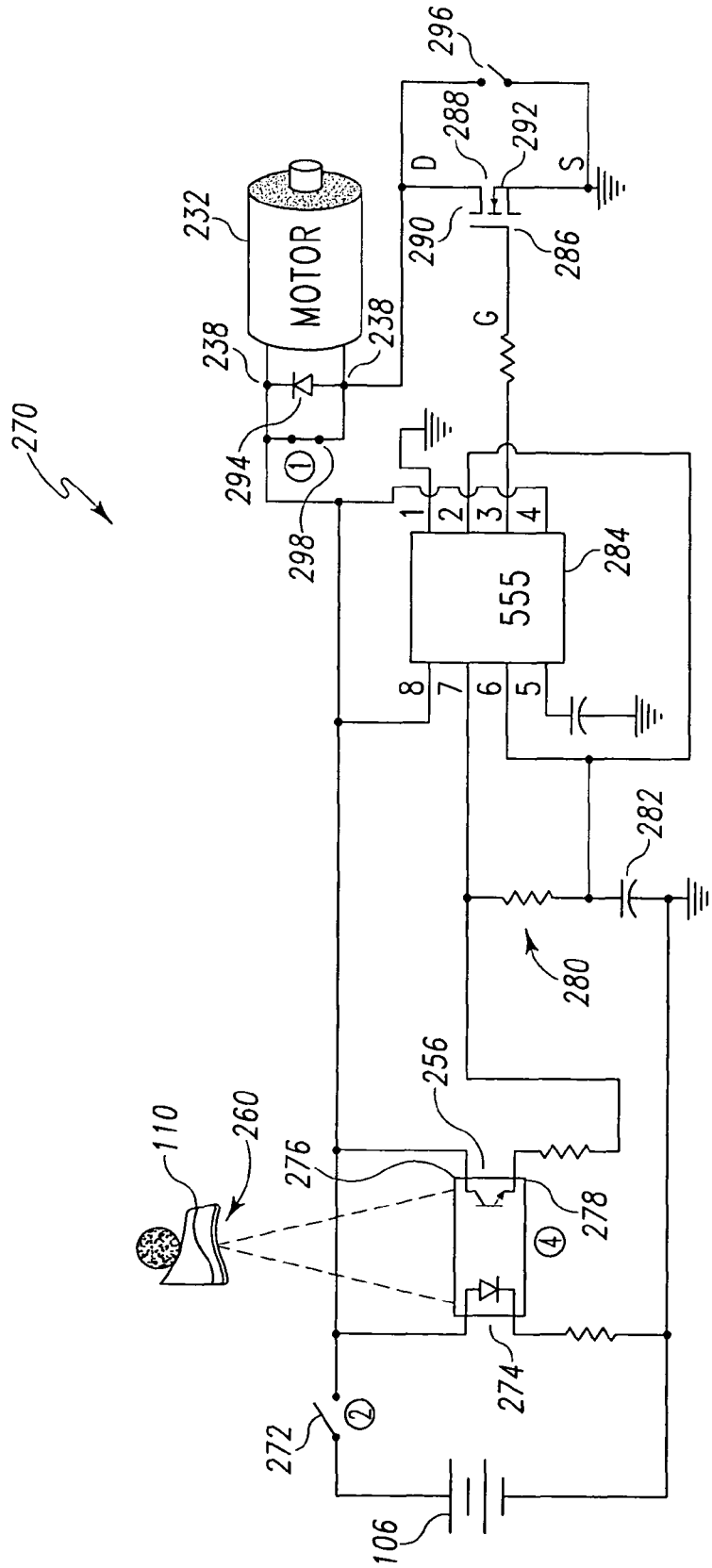


Fig. 24

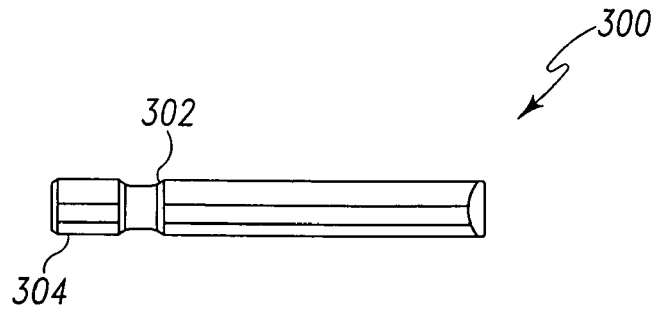


Fig. 25

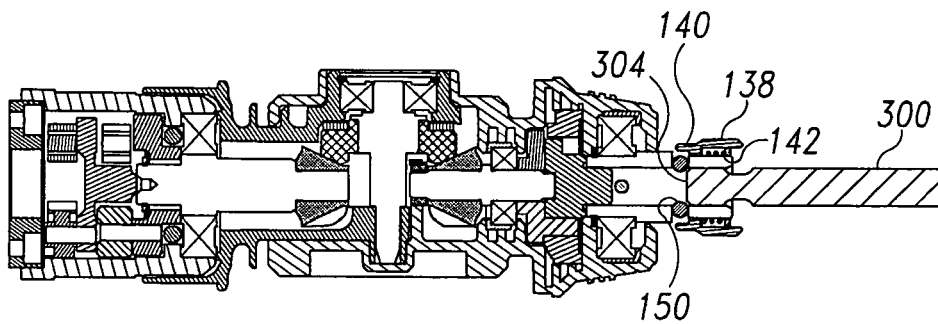


Fig. 26

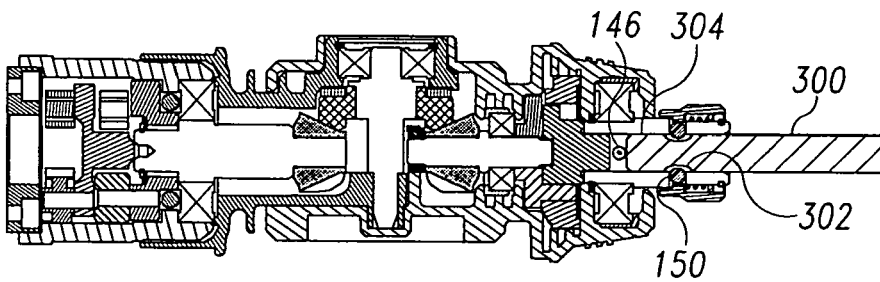


Fig. 27

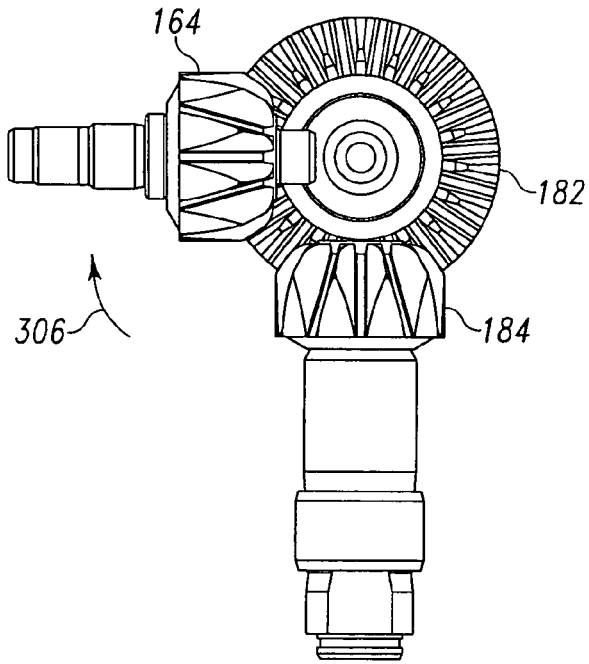


Fig. 28

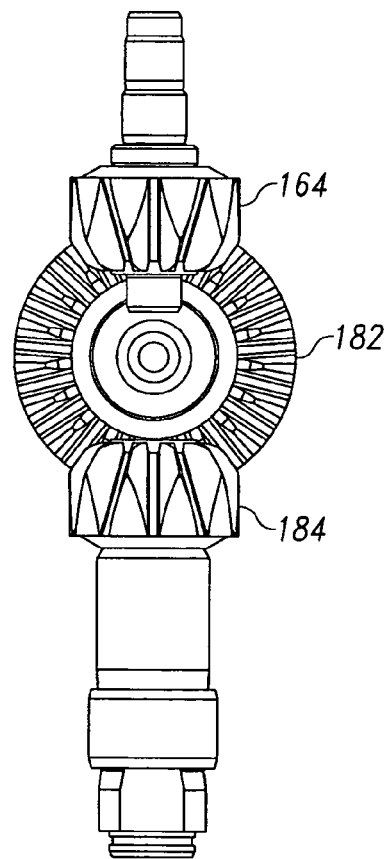


Fig. 29

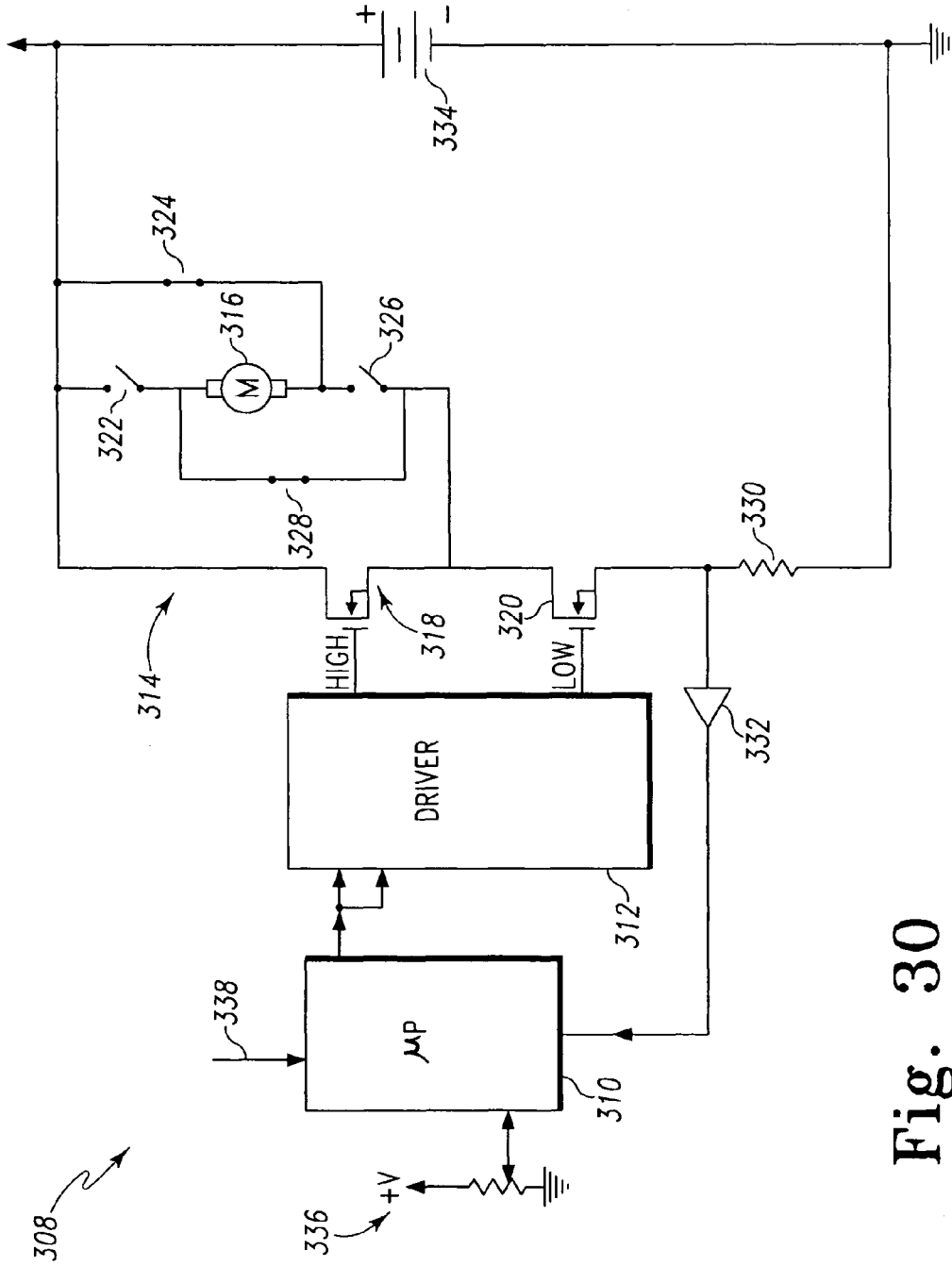


Fig. 30

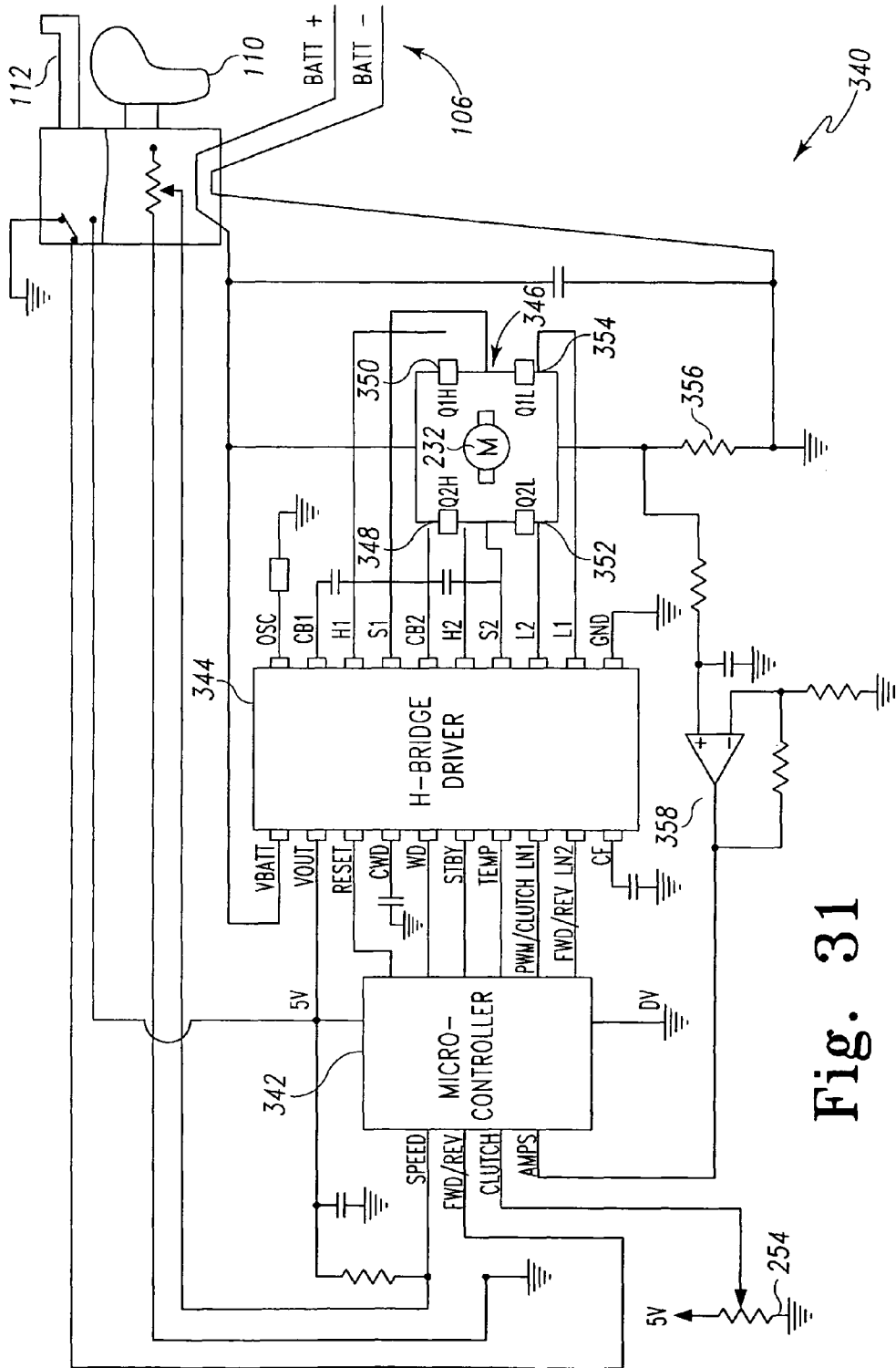


Fig. 31

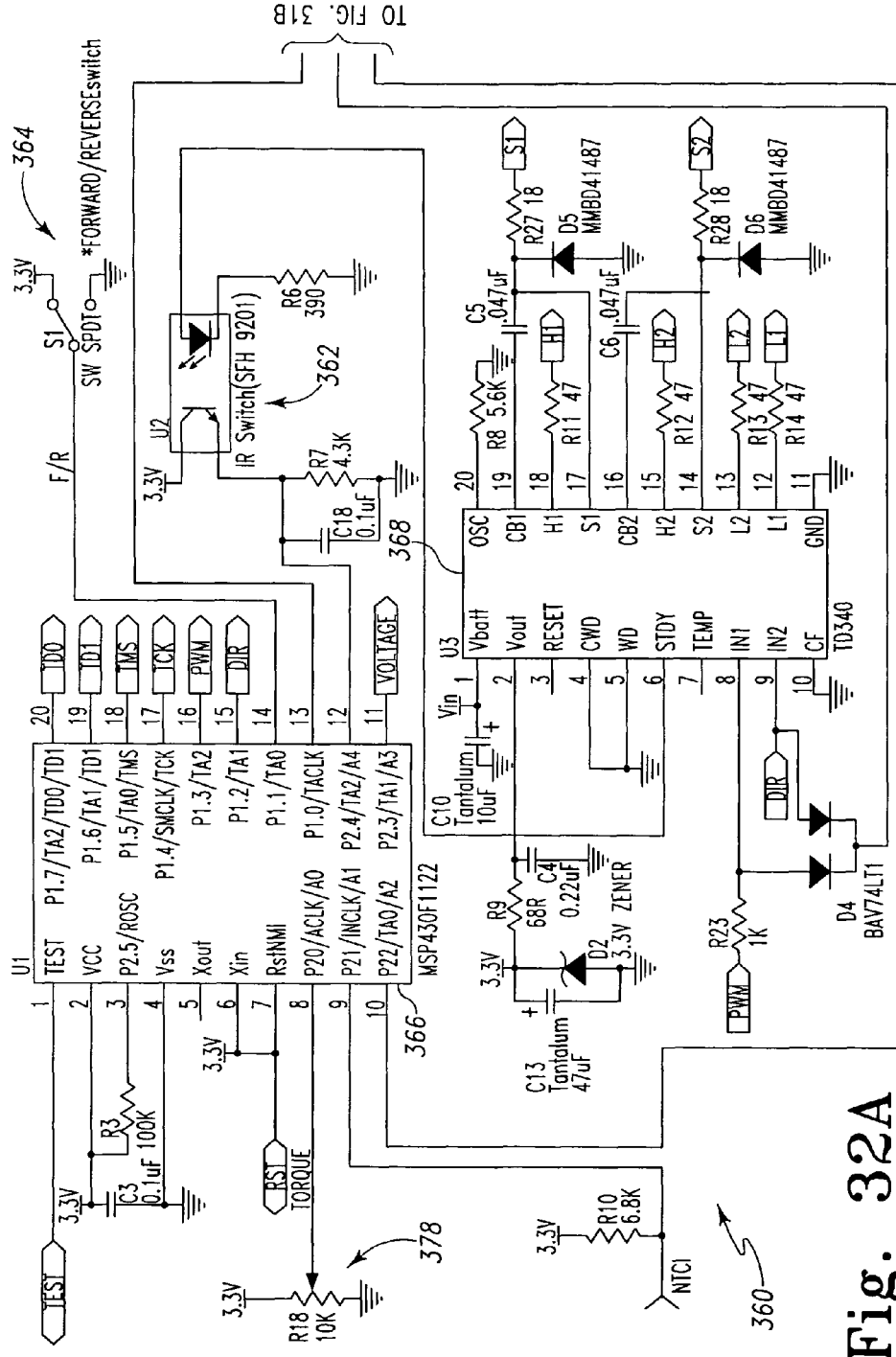


Fig. 32A

TO FIG. 31B

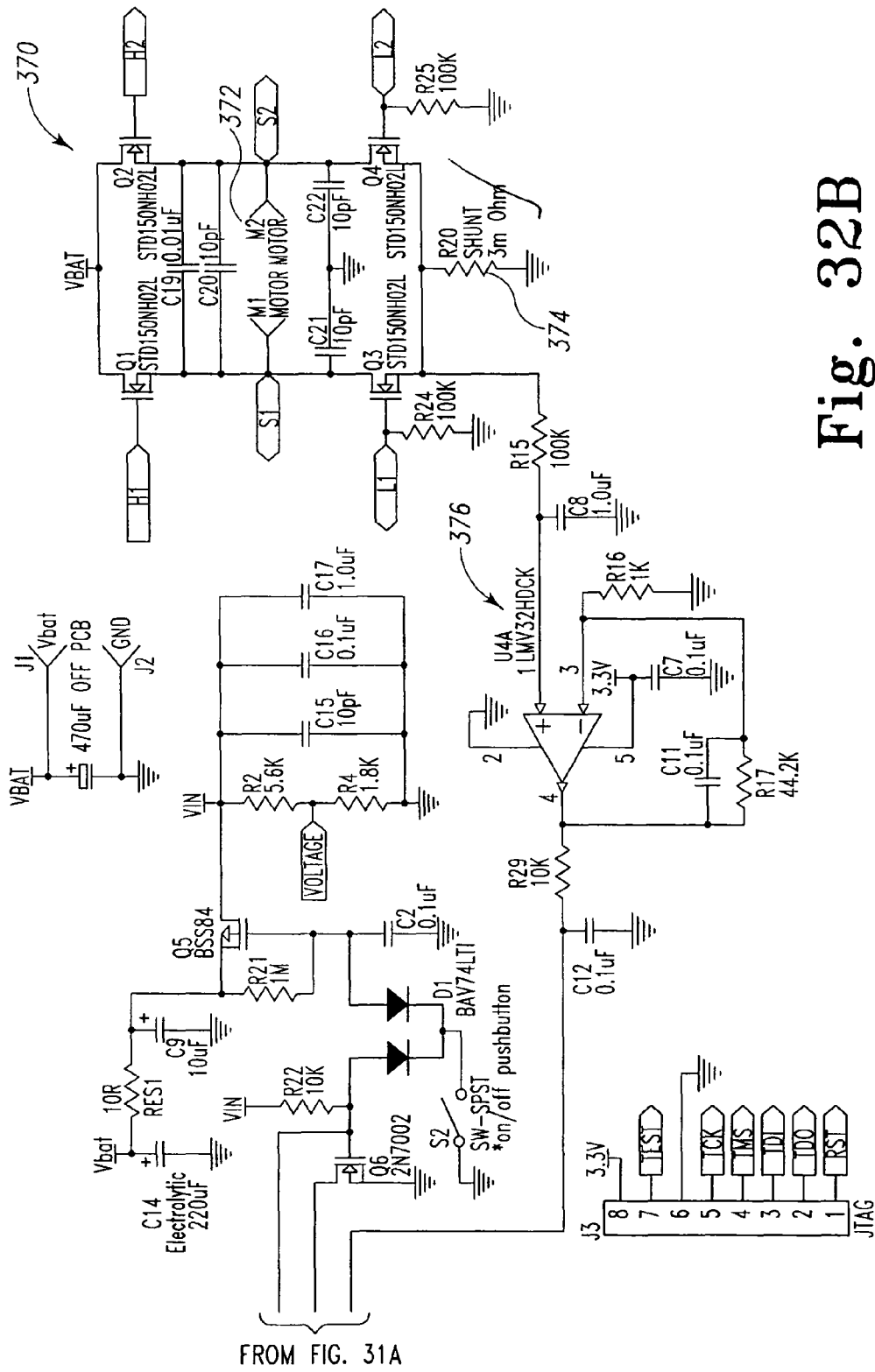


Fig. 32B

FROM FIG. 31A

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ARTICULATING DRILL WITH INTEGRATED CIRCUIT BOARD AND METHOD OF OPERATION

This application claims the benefit of provisional U.S. patent application Ser. No. 60/733,546, filed on Nov. 4, 2005. The disclosure of this provisional patent application is hereby totally incorporated by reference in its entirety.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to an electric hand tool and more particularly to an articulating power hand tool.

BACKGROUND

Power tools including battery operated tools are well-known. These tools typically include an electric motor having an output shaft that is coupled to a spindle for holding a tool. The tool may be a drill bit, sanding disc, a de-burring implement, or the like. The power source may be a battery source such as a Ni-Cad or other rechargeable battery that may be de-coupled from the tool to charge the battery and coupled to the tool to provide power.

The power source is coupled to the electric motor through a power switch. The switch includes input electrical contacts for coupling the switch to the power source. Within the switch housing, a moveable member, sometimes called a switch, is coupled to the input electrical contacts and to a wiper of a potentiometer. As the moveable member is pressed against the biasing component of the switch, it causes the input electrical contacts to close and provide current to one terminal of the electric motor and to the wiper of the potentiometer. The moveable member is biased so that the biasing force returns the moveable member to the position where the input electrical contacts are open when the moveable member is released. The current is coupled to a timing signal generator, such as a "555" circuit, through the potentiometer. As the member or trigger continues to be pulled against the biasing force so that the wiper reduces the resistance of the potentiometer from an open circuit to a low resistance or short circuit condition, the level of the current supplied to the timing signal generator increases.

The output of the timing signal generator is coupled to the gate of a solid state device, such as a MOSFET. The source and drain of the solid state device are coupled between a second terminal of the electric motor and electrical ground. In response to the timing signal turning the solid state device on and off, the motor is selectively coupled to electrical ground through the solid state device. Thus, as the timing signal enables the solid state device to couple the motor to electrical ground for longer and longer intervals, the current flows through the motor for longer intervals. The longer the motor is coupled to power, the faster the electric motor rotates the output shaft of the motor. Consequently, the tool operator is able to vary the speed of the motor and, correspondingly, the rotational speed of the tool in the spindle by manipulating the trigger for the power switch.

The timing signal generated by the timing circuit selectively couples the motor to the power source because it alternates between a logically on-state and a logically off-state. During the logically off-state, the motor is no longer coupled to the power source. The windings in the motor, however, still have current in them. To provide a path for this current, a freewheeling diode is provided across the terminals of the motor.

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The trigger of the power switch is also coupled to two sets of contacts. One of these contact sets is called the bypass contact set. When the trigger reaches the stop position of its travel against the biasing component, it causes the bypass contacts to close. The closing of the bypass contacts causes the current through the motor to bypass the solid state device and be shunted to electrical ground. This action enables the motor to remain continuously coupled to the power source and reach its maximum speed.

The other set of electrical contacts controlled by the switch trigger are the brake contacts. These contacts are closed when the trigger is at the fully biased off position. As the trigger is moved against the biasing force, the brake contacts open. The brake contacts couple one terminal of the electric motor to the other terminal of the motor. In response to the trigger being released from a position that enables power to be supplied to the motor, the brake contacts close to provide a current path through the motor for dynamic braking of the motor. This enables the motor to stop more quickly than if the motor simply coasted to a stop under the effects of friction.

While the power switch described above is effective for tool speed control, it suffers from some limitations. Known power switches are limited because of the effect of carrying the battery current through the switch. When the battery current is first applied to the contacts, the current level may be sufficient to cause arcing. Arcing may cause the contacts to become pitted or otherwise damaged. Additionally, large currents also tend to heat the components within the switch. Consequently, the switch may require a heat sink or a larger volume to dissipate heat within the switch. The larger size of the housing for the switch may also impact the design of the tool housing to accommodate the switch geometry. Another factor affecting the geometry or size of the switch housing is the potentiometer that generates the variable speed signal. Typically, the distance traveled by the wiper of the potentiometer is approximately the same as the distance traveled by the trigger. In many cases, this distance is approximately 7 mm and this distance must be accommodated by the potentiometer and the housing in which the potentiometer is mounted.

The direction of motor rotation depends upon whether the battery current flows through the motor from the first terminal to the second terminal or vice versa. Because bidirectional rotation of battery operated tools is desirable, most tools are provided with a two position switch that determines the direction of battery current through the electric motor. In some previously known switches for battery operated tools, this two position switch is incorporated in its own housing that is mounted to the switch housing. The additional two position switch housing may exacerbate the space issues already noted. In other known switches, the two position switch may be integrated within the switch housing. This arrangement, while perhaps smaller than the two housing construction, adds another set of contacts to the switch with the attendant heat or contact deterioration concerns that arise from the motor current flowing through these contacts.

Another limitation of known power switches relates to the torque control for power tools. In some battery operated tools, mechanical clutches are used to set a torque limit for the tool. When the resistance to the rotation of the tool causes the torque generated by the tool to increase to the torque limit, the clutch slips to reduce the torque. The torque may then build again until it reaches the limit and the clutch slips again. The iterating action of clutch slippage followed by renewed torque buildup is sensed by the operator as vibration. This vibration informs the operator that the tool is operating at the

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set torque limit. This slippage also causes wear of the mechanical components from friction and impact.

Electric drills suffer the foregoing limitations. Moreover, electric drills are usually constructed as straight-drilling machines in which the drill spindle extends parallel to the motor shaft and axis of the housing and, for specific purposes, as angular-drilling machines in which the drill spindle is aligned at a right angle to the motor shaft and housing axis. In certain applications in which both straight and angular drilling must be carried out, as is the case in installations in wooden house construction, the two machines must be at hand for continuous alternation.

What is needed is an articulating power hand tool which does not require a large housing for mechanical switches. What is further needed is an articulating power hand tool with a reduced forward section and a compact articulating system to allow for use of the tool in confined areas.

SUMMARY

The present invention is an articulating hand power tool. In one embodiment, the tool includes an articulating hand power tool with a main housing having a longitudinal axis, a head portion rotatably engaged with the main housing for placement at a plurality of angles with respect to the longitudinal axis of the main housing, an integrated circuit board located within the main housing and at least one controller accessible from outside of the main housing for controlling the integrated circuit board.

In another embodiment, a hand power tool includes a longitudinally extending main housing, a head portion configured to be engaged with the main housing at a plurality of angles with respect to the longitudinal axis of the main housing, each of the plurality of angles within a single plane, an articulation gear system for providing motive force to a bit holder in the head portion including a motor side pinion gear having an axis of rotation generally parallel to a longitudinal axis of the housing and an output pinion gear having an axis of rotation generally parallel to a longitudinal axis of the head portion, wherein the motor side pinion gear is operatively connected to the output side pinion gear through a bevel gear, a controller operable from outside of the main housing and located generally on the plane and an integrated circuit located within the main housing and responsive to the controller.

One method in accordance with the invention includes rotating a head portion of a power tool to one of a plurality of angles with respect to the longitudinal axis of a main housing of the power tool, moving a variable speed trigger switch located outside of the main housing, generating a variable speed signal with an integrated circuit located within the main housing in response to the movement of the variable speed trigger, controlling the speed of a motor located within the main housing based upon the variable speed signal and transferring motive force from the motor to a component within the head portion.

These and other advantages and features of the present invention may be discerned from reviewing the accompanying drawings and the detailed description of the preferred embodiment of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The present invention may take form in various system and method components and arrangement of system and method

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components. The drawings are only for purposes of illustrating exemplary embodiments and are not to be construed as limiting the invention.

FIG. 1 shows a perspective view of an articulating drill incorporating features of the present invention;

FIG. 2 shows a side elevational view of the articulating drill of FIG. 1 with the rechargeable battery pack removed;

FIG. 3 shows a perspective view of the articulating drill of FIG. 1 with the battery pack, a portion of the main housing cover, and a portion of the head housing removed and a bit in the bit holder;

FIG. 4 shows a cross-sectional view of the head portion, the articulating gear system and the planetary gear system of the articulating drill of FIG. 1;

FIG. 5 shows an exploded perspective view of the head portion, including an automatic spindle lock system, of the articulating drill of FIG. 1;

FIG. 6 shows a top plan view of the head portion of the drill of FIG. 1 with some components located within bays in the head housing;

FIG. 7 shows a top plan view of a bracket used to support an output pinion shaft in the articulating drill of FIG. 1;

FIG. 8 shows a side plan view of the bracket of FIG. 7;

FIG. 9 shows a top elevational view of the planetary gear section, articulating section and head portion of the articulating drill of FIG. 1 with the main housing and a portion of the head housing removed;

FIG. 10 shows a side elevational view of the articulating gear system of the articulating drill of FIG. 1 including a bevel gear and two pinion gears;

FIG. 11 is a perspective view of a portion of the head housing of the drill of FIG. 1 with a plurality of teeth in a well which are formed complimentary to teeth on the articulation button;

FIG. 12 shows a perspective view of the articulating button of the articulating drill of FIG. 1;

FIG. 13 shows a perspective view of the bottom of the articulating button of FIG. 12;

FIG. 14 shows a partial top elevational view of the inner surface of the outer housing of the articulating drill of FIG. 1 with teeth formed complimentary to the teeth on the articulation button and a hole for receiving a raised portion of the articulating button;

FIG. 15 shows a top elevational view of the inner surface of the outer housing of the articulating drill of FIG. 1;

FIG. 16 shows a partial plan view of the articulating drill of FIG. 1 with the head portion aligned with the main housing portion and without a dust lid;

FIG. 17 shows a partial plan view of the articulating drill of FIG. 1 with the head portion aligned with the main housing portion with a dust lid;

FIG. 18 shows a side elevational view of the articulating drill of FIG. 18 with the head portion rotated to an angle of 90 degrees from the main housing portion of the drill and a portion of the main housing portion removed to show the position of the dust lid of FIG. 17;

FIG. 19 shows a side elevational view of the articulating drill of FIG. 18 with the head portion rotated to an angle of 180 degrees from the main housing portion of the drill and a portion of the main housing portion removed to show the position of the dust lid of FIG. 17;

FIG. 20 shows a detail view of the dust lid of FIG. 19;

FIG. 21 shows a perspective view of the articulating drill of FIG. 1 with the variable speed trigger switch, clutch control and a portion of the main housing removed;

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FIGS. 22a, 22b and 22c show various views of a printed circuit board of the articulating drill of FIG. 1 in accordance with principles of the invention;

FIG. 23 shows a perspective view of the articulating drill of FIG. 21 with a collapsible boot with an internal reflective surface installed over a light generator and a light sensor;

FIG. 24 shows a schematic/block diagram of the drill of FIG. 1 incorporating an optical switch for motor speed control;

FIG. 25 shows a side elevational view of a drill bit in the form of a screw driver bit that may be used with the articulating drill of FIG. 1;

FIG. 26 shows a cross-sectional view of the drill bit of FIG. 25 being inserted into the articulating drill of FIG. 1;

FIG. 27 shows a cross-sectional view of the drill bit of FIG. 25 inserted into the articulating drill of FIG. 1;

FIG. 28 shows a partial top elevational view of a bevel gear in accordance with principles of the invention with two pinion gears at a 90 degree spacing;

FIG. 29 shows a partial top elevational view of the bevel gear of FIG. 28 with the two pinion gears at a 180 degree spacing;

FIG. 30 shows an electrical diagram/schematic of a powered tool that dynamically brakes the tool motor using a motor interface circuit having a half bridge to provide vibratory feedback to the operator that the torque limit has been reached;

FIG. 31 shows an electrical diagram/schematic of a circuit that may be used with the drill of FIG. 1 which dynamically brakes the drill motor using a motor interface circuit having a full H-bridge circuit to provide vibratory feedback to the operator that the torque limit has been reached; and

FIGS. 32A and 32B show an electrical diagram/schematic of a powered tool that provides solid state motor speed control in correspondence with a variable speed signal from an optical switch and that dynamically brakes the motor to indicate a torque limit has been reached.

DESCRIPTION

An articulating drill generally designated 100 is shown in FIG. 1. In the embodiment of FIG. 1, the drill 100 includes a main housing portion 102 and a head portion 104. The main housing portion 102 houses a motor and associated electronics for control of the drill 100. The main housing portion 102 includes a battery receptacle for receiving a rechargeable battery pack 106 as is known in the art. In one embodiment, the rechargeable battery pack 106 comprises a lithium-ion battery. The battery pack 106 is removed by depression of the battery release tabs 108. FIG. 2 shows the drill 100 with the battery pack 106 removed. The drill 100 may alternatively be powered by an external power source such as an external battery or a power cord.

A variable speed trigger switch 110 controls the speed at which the motor rotates. The direction of rotation of the motor is controlled by a reversing button 112 which slides within a finger platform 114. Ventilation openings 116 allow for cooling air to be circulated around the motor inside of the main housing 102. A clutch control 118 sets the maximum torque that may be generated when using the drill 100. At the position shown in FIG. 1, the clutch control 118 is at the highest setting or drill mode. At the highest setting, the clutch is disabled to provide maximum torque. By sliding the clutch control 118 downwardly from the position shown in FIG. 1, a user may set a desired torque limit that is allowed to be generated by the drill 100 as discussed in more detail below.

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Accordingly, at settings other than the highest setting, a torque above the setting of the clutch control 118 causes the clutch to activate.

The main housing portion 102 also includes an articulation button 120 and a plurality of angle reference indicators 122 molded onto the outer surface 124 of the main housing 102. In the embodiment of FIG. 1, there are five angle reference indicators 122 used to identify five angular positions in which the head portion 104 may be placed.

The head portion 104 includes a collet locking device 126 and an angle indicator 128. The angle at which the head portion 104 is positioned is indicated by the angle reference indicator 122 with which the angle indicator 128 is aligned. As shown in FIG. 1, the head portion 104 is at a 90 degree angle with respect to the main housing portion 102. In FIG. 2, the head portion 104 is axially aligned with the main housing portion 102. Although the embodiment of FIGS. 1 and 2 has five angle reference indicators 122, there may be additional or fewer angle reference indicators 122 and corresponding angles at which the head portion 104 may be placed with respect to the main housing portion 102.

Referring now to FIGS. 3-6, the collet locking device 126 is located around a bit holder 130 which is in turn supported by a ball bearing 132 that is fixed within a bearing pocket 134 of the head housing 136. The collet locking device 126 includes a sleeve 138 with recesses 140. A spring 142 is positioned about the bit holder 130. The bit holder 130 includes a hole 144 which receives a cylinder pin 146 and recesses 148 which receive steel balls 150.

The bearing 132 abuts the head housing 136 of the head portion 104 at the outer rear periphery of the bearing 132. More specifically, the bearing 132 abuts a flange 152. In this embodiment, the flange 152 is continuous about the housing 136, although a flange may alternatively be in the form of a plurality of fins located about the inner portion of the housing 136.

The bit holder 130 is operably coupled to a drive collet 154 which is in turn connected to an output pinion shaft 156 through a drive plate 158 which is fixedly attached to the output pinion shaft 156. A lock ring 160 surrounds the drive collet 154 and three locking pins 162. The lock ring 160, the drive collet 154, the drive plate 158, and the locking pins 162 all comprise an automatic spindle lock system such that the output bit holder 130 can only be driven from the pinion side as known in the art. When driven from the bit side, i.e., when the tool 100 is used as a manual screwdriver, the spindle lock system keeps the output pinion shaft 156 from rotating thus facilitating use of the tool 100 as a manual screwdriver. In an alternative embodiment, a manually manipulated locking device may be used.

A pinion gear 164 is located at the opposite end of the output pinion shaft 156 from the drive plate 158. One end of the output pinion shaft 156 is maintained in axial alignment by a bearing 166 which fits within bearing pocket 168. The opposite end of the output pinion shaft 156 is supported by a sleeve 170. The sleeve 170 is supported on one side by a flange 172 on the head housing 136. On the opposite side, the sleeve 170 is supported by a bracket 174 also shown in FIGS. 7 and 8.

The bracket 174 includes a support area 176 configured complimentary to a portion of the sleeve 170. Two connection arms 178 are configured to be attached to the head housing 136 as shown in FIG. 9. The bracket 174 eliminates the need to provide a matching flange for flange 172 molded into the opposite side of the head housing 136. The elimination of the need for an opposing flange allows for a significant increase in design freedom as the space requirements for the support

structure for the sleeve 170 are reduced. The bracket 174 may be stamped from W108 steel to provide the needed rigidity and strength.

Referring now to FIG. 10, the pinion gear 164 forms a portion of an articulating gear system 180. The articulating gear system 180 further includes a bevel gear 182 which is engaged at the output portion of the articulating gear system 180 with the pinion gear 164 and further engaged on the motor portion by pinion gear 184. The shaft 186 of the bevel gear 182 is supported at one end within a hole 188 (see FIG. 4) of the frame 190. The frame 190 is made from a zinc and aluminum alloy ZA-8. This material provides a sufficiently low coefficient of friction to ensure relatively small frictional forces exist between the shaft 186 and the frame 190.

The shaft 186 is radially and axially supported at the opposite end by a ball bearing 192 supported by the frame 190. At this end of the shaft 186, however, comparatively larger forces are generated than at the end of the shaft 186 inserted within the hole 188. More specifically, as shown in FIG. 10, both pinion gear 164 and pinion gear 184 are located on the same side of the bevel gear 182. Accordingly, as the articulating gear system 180 rotates, a force is generated on the bevel gear 182 in the direction of the arrow 194 toward the base 196 of the bevel gear 182. This force acts to disengage the bevel gear 182 from the pinion gear 164 and the pinion gear 184. With this increased force acting upon the bevel gear 182, an unacceptable amount of axial force would be transmitted to the bearing 192. Accordingly, a thrust bearing 198 is provided to protect the ball bearing 192 and to provide a low friction support for the base 196 of the bevel gear 182. The thrust bearing 198 is made of a material with an acceptably low coefficient of friction such as oil impregnated bronze commercially available from McMaster Carr of Chicago, Ill. Accordingly, the friction generated at the base 196 of the bevel gear 182 is maintained within acceptable levels.

Referring again to FIG. 4, the pinion gear 184 is fixedly attached to a planetary gearbox shaft 200 which receives torque from a planetary gear system generally indicated as reference numeral 202. The planetary gear system 202 receives torque from a motor as is known in the art. The planetary gear system 202 is located within a planetary gear housing 204 which is inserted partially within the frame 190. This arrangement allows for the planetary gear system 202 to be separately manufactured from the other components while simplifying assembly of the planetary gear system 202 with the other components. This modularity further allows for alternative gearings to be provided in the planetary gear system 202 while ensuring a proper fit with the other components.

Generally, it may be desired to provide a simple friction fit between the planetary gear housing 204 and the frame 190. In the embodiment of FIG. 4, however, the articulating gear system 180 generates an axial force along the planetary gearbox shaft 200. This axial force acts to disengage the planetary gear housing 204 from the frame 190. Accordingly, pins 206 and 208 which extend through both the planetary gear housing 204 and the frame 190 are provided. The pins 206 and 208 ensure the planetary gear housing 204 does not become detached from the frame 190 during operation of the drill 100. Alternatively, the planetary gear housing 204 and the frame 190 may be formed as an integral unit.

Continuing with FIG. 4, the frame 190 is configured to slidingly mate with the head housing 136. To this end, the head housing 136 includes a shroud portion 210 which is complementarily formed to the frame 190 about the ball bearing 192. The head housing 136 further includes a recess 212 which is configured to receive the portion of the frame 190

which defines the hole 188. Also shown in FIG. 4 is a well 214 which includes a plurality of teeth 216 shown in FIG. 11.

With further reference to FIGS. 12-14, the well teeth 216 are formed complimentary to a plurality of teeth 218 which are formed in the articulation button 120. The articulation button 120 includes a raised center portion 220 which is configured to fit within a hole 222 in the main housing portion 102. The teeth 218 of the articulation button 120 are further configured to mesh with a plurality of teeth 224 formed on the inner side of the main housing portion 102 around the hole 222. The articulation button 120 also includes a spring receiving well 226 on the side of the articulation button 120 facing the well 214. When assembled, a spring (not shown) is located within the well 214 and extends into the spring receiving well 226 forcing the raised center portion 220 of the articulation button 120 toward a position wherein the articulation button 120 projects into the hole 222.

Referring to FIGS. 4 and 15, the frame 190 is supported axially in the main housing portion 102, which in this embodiment is made of plastic, by a rib 228. The rib 228 lies beneath a fin 230 of the frame 190 when the frame 190 is installed in the main housing portion 102 as shown in FIG. 3. The planetary gear system 202 is mechanically secured to a motor 232 which is itself electrically connected to a printed circuit board 234 which in turn is electrically connected to a battery contact holder 236. The contact holder 236 mates with battery pack receptacles on the battery pack 106 and transmits battery power to the electronic circuit board 234 through lead wires (not shown). Another pair of lead wires (not shown) extend from the circuit board 234 to the motor terminals 238 to deliver the required voltage level to the motor 232.

Referring now to FIG. 5, a gap 240 is provided in the portion of the head housing 136 surrounding the bevel gear 182 which allows the head housing 136 to be rotated with respect to the main housing portion 102 while the pinion gear 164 remains engaged with the bevel gear 182. When the head portion 104 is axially aligned with the main housing portion 102, however, the gap 240 is exposed as shown in FIG. 16. The articulating gear system 180 is thus exposed allowing contaminants access to the articulating gear system 180 which could foul the articulating gear system as well as presenting a safety concern since clothing, fingers or hair could become enmeshed in the articulating gear system 180. Accordingly, a floating dust lid 242 shown in FIG. 17 is used to prevent contamination of the articulating gear system 180 and to avoid exposure of moving gears to an operator through the gap 240, particularly when the head housing 136 is axially aligned with the main housing portion 102 as shown in FIG. 17.

The dust lid 242 is located in a channel 244 defined by the main housing portion 102 and the head housing 136 as shown in FIGS. 18-20. The position of the dust lid 242 at the lower portion (as depicted in FIGS. 18 and 19) of the channel 244 is constrained either by a movable dust lid travel limiter 246 positioned on the head housing 136, shown most clearly in FIGS. 11 and 20, or by a portion 248 of the frame 190. The position of the dust lid 242 at the upper portion of the channel 244 is constrained either by a neck portion 250 of the head housing 136 or by a lip 252 in the main housing portion 102.

Referring now to FIGS. 3, and 21-23, the clutch control 118 is mechanically interfaced with a linear potentiometer 254 on the circuit board 234. Also located on the circuit board 234 is a light sensor 256 which is covered by a collapsible rubber boot 258 which is in turn mechanically fastened to the variable speed trigger 110. A reflective surface 260 (see FIG. 24) is located on the inside of the rubber boot 258. A plastic spring locating member 262 which is mechanically secured to the

circuit board 234 serves to locate and support a spring 264 which is mechanically fastened to the variable speed trigger 110. The spring 264 biases the variable speed trigger 110 in a direction away from the circuit board 234 about a pivot 266. The circuit board 234 also contains a two position slide switch 268 which is mechanically interfaced to the reversing button 112.

Manipulation of the variable speed trigger 110 about the pivot 266 changes the position of the reflective surface 260 relative to the light sensor 256 to produce a variable speed control signal. While the embodiment of tool 100 incorporates an optical signal generator and receiver for provision of a variable speed control signal, such a tool may alternatively use a pressure transducer, a capacitive proximity sensor, or an inductive proximity sensor. In these alternative embodiments, a pressure sensing switch for generating the variable motor speed control signal may include a pressure transducer for generating a variable speed control signal that corresponds to a pressure applied to the pressure transducer directly by the operator or through an intermediate member such as a moveable member that traverses the distance between the stop position and the full speed position.

An embodiment of the variable motor speed control signal implemented with a capacitive proximity sensor may include a capacitive sensor that generates a variable speed control signal that corresponds to an electrical capacitance generated by the proximity of an operator's finger or moveable member's surface to the capacitive sensor. An embodiment implemented with an inductive proximity sensor generates a variable speed control signal that corresponds to an electrical inductance generated by the proximity of an operator's finger or moveable member's surface to the inductive sensor.

Referring to FIG. 24, the variable speed control circuit 270 of the tool 100 is schematically shown. The variable speed control circuit 270 includes a power contact 272 which is operably connected to the variable speed trigger switch 110. An optical signal generator 274 is coupled to the battery 106 and arranged on the circuit board 232 such that light emitted from the optical signal generator 274 is directed toward the reflective surface 260 of the variable speed trigger switch 110 and directed toward the light sensor 256.

The light sensor 256 and the optical signal generator 274 may be located in the same housing or each may be within a separate housing. When the two components are located in the same housing, the light generator and sensor may emit and receive light through a single sight glass in the housing. Alternatively, each component may have a separate sight glass. An integrated component having the light generator and sensor in a single housing is a QRD1114 Reflective Object Sensor available from Fairchild Semiconductor of Sunnyvale, Calif. Such a housing is substantially smaller than a potentiometer that has a wiper, which traverses approximately the same distance as the trigger traverses from the stop to the full speed position.

The optical signal generator 274 and the light sensor 256 may be an infrared light emitter and an infrared light receiver. In an alternative embodiment, an IR transceiver may be contained within a flexible dust cover that is mechanically fastened to the back of the variable speed trigger switch. In such an embodiment, the inside of the cover in the vicinity of the moveable trigger reflects the optical signal to the receiver for generating the speed control signal.

Control of a tool incorporating the light sensor 256 may be adversely affected by external energy sources such as the sun. Accordingly, in one embodiment, the collapsible boot or dust cover 258 is made from an opaque material or coated with an opaque material such that energy from the sun which may

leak past the housing and trigger arrangement does not affect the signal received by the light sensor 256. Alternatively, a light sensor that is sensitive to a specific frequency band may be used with a device which shields the light sensor from only that specific frequency band. In further embodiments, other circuitry or coding which uniquely identifies the energy from the reflected signal from interfering energy may be used.

The light sensor 256 is an optical transistor having a collector 276 coupled to the battery pack 106 through the contact 272 and an emitter 278 coupled to electrical ground through a voltage divider 280 and a capacitor 282. A timing signal generator 284 receives voltage from the voltage divider 280. In the tool 100, the timing signal generator 264 is a commonly known "555" timer, although other timing signal generators may be used.

The output of the timing signal generator 264 is coupled to a gate 286 of a MOSFET 288 that has a drain 290 coupled to one of the motor terminals 238 and a source 292 coupled to electrical ground. The other motor terminal 238 is coupled to the battery pack 106 through the contact 272. A freewheeling diode 294 is coupled across the motor terminals 238. A bypass contact 296, which is operatively connected to the variable speed trigger switch 110, is located in parallel to the MOSFET 288 between the motor terminal 238 and electrical ground and a brake contact 298 is in parallel with the freewheeling diode 294.

Operation of the drill 100 is explained with initial reference to FIGS. 24-26. The collet locking device 126 is configured to operate with bits such as the screw driver bit 300 shown in FIG. 24. The screw driver bit 300 and the bit holder 130 are complementarily shaped. In this example, both the screw driver bit 300 and the bit holder 130 are generally hexagonal in shape, although alternative shapes may be used. The screw driver bit 300 has a diameter slightly less than the bit holder 130 so that it may fit within the bit holder 130. The screw driver bit 300 includes a notched area 302 and a tail portion 304.

Initially, the sleeve 138 is moved to the right from the position shown in FIG. 4 to the position shown in FIG. 26 thereby compressing the spring 142. As the sleeve 138 moves, recesses 140 in the sleeve 138 are positioned adjacent to the recesses 148 in the bit holder 130. Then, as the screw driver bit 300 is moved into the bit holder 130, the tail portion 304 forces the steel balls 150 toward the recesses 140 and out of the channel of the bit holder 130, allowing the tail portion 304 to move completely past the steel balls 150.

At this point, the notched area 302 is aligned with the recesses 148. The sleeve 138 is then released, allowing the spring 142 to bias the sleeve 138 onto the bit holder 130 which is to the left from the position shown in FIG. 27. As the sleeve 138 moves, the recesses 140 are moved away from the recesses 148 thereby forcing the steel balls 150 partially into the channel of the bit holder 130 as shown in FIG. 27. Movement of the steel balls 150 into the channel of the bit holder 130 is allowed since the notched area 302 is aligned with the recesses 148. At this point, the bit 300 is firmly held within the bit holder 130.

The head housing 136 is then articulated to a desired angle with respect to the main housing portion 102. Initially, the spring (not shown) in the spring receiving well 226 forces the articulation button 120 to extend into the hole 222. Accordingly, the teeth 218 of the articulation button 120 are meshed with the teeth 224 in the main housing portion 102 as well as the teeth 216 in the well 214 of the head housing 136, thereby angularly locking the articulation button 120 (and the head housing 136) with the main housing portion 102. Additionally, the dust lid 242 is constrained at the upper portion of the

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channel **244** by the neck portion **250** of the head housing **136** and at the lower portion of the channel **244** by the portion **248** of the frame **190** as shown in FIG. **18**.

The operator then applies force to the articulation button **120** causing the spring (not shown) to be depressed thereby disengaging the teeth **218** from the teeth **224**. Thus, even though the teeth **218** remain engaged with the teeth **216**, the head portion **104** is allowed to pivot with respect to the main housing portion **102**. As the head portion **104** is articulated, for example, from the position shown in FIG. **1** to the position shown in FIG. **2**, the pinion gear **164** articulates about the bevel gear **182**. By way of example, FIG. **28** shows the positions of the pinion gears **164** and **184** with respect to the bevel gear **182** when the drill **100** is in the configuration shown in FIG. **1**. In this configuration, the pinion gear **164** is approximately 90 degrees away from the pinion gear **184** about the perimeter of the bevel gear **182**. As the head portion **104** is articulated in the direction of the arrow **306**, the pinion gear **164** articulates about the bevel gear **182** in the same direction. Thus, when the head portion **104** is aligned with the main housing portion **102**, the pinion gear **164** is positioned on the bevel gear **182** at a location 180 degrees away from the pinion gear **184** as shown in FIG. **29**.

Throughout this articulation, the pinion gears **164** and **184** remain engaged with the bevel gear **182**. Accordingly, the bit holder **130** may be rotated by the motor **232** as the head housing **136** is articulated. Additionally, the articulation of the head housing **136** causes the movable dust lid travel limiter **246** to contact the dust lid **242** and push the dust lid **242** along the channel **244**. Thus, the dust lid **242**, which is configured to be wider than the gap **240** as shown in FIG. **17**, restricts access from outside of the drill **100** to the articulating gear system **180**.

When the articulating drill **100** is rotated to the desired location, the operator reduces the force applied to the articulating button **120**. The spring (not shown) in the spring receiving well **226** is then allowed to force the articulation button **120** away from the well **214** until the articulation button **120** extends through the hole **222**. Accordingly, the teeth **218** of the articulation button **120** are meshed with the teeth **224** in the main housing portion **102** as well as the teeth **216** in the well **214** of the head housing **136**, thereby angularly locking the articulation button **120** (and the head housing **136**) with the main housing portion **102**.

The desired direction of rotation for the bit **300** is then established by placing the reversing button **112** in the position corresponding to the desired direction of rotation in a known manner. Rotation is accomplished by moving the variable speed trigger switch **110** about the pivot **266** to close the power contact **272**. The closing of the contact **272** completes a circuit allowing current to flow to the optical signal generator **274** causing light to be emitted.

The emitted light strikes the reflective surface **260** and a portion of the light is reflected toward the light sensor **256**. The amount of light reflected by the reflective surface **260** increases as the reflective surface **260** is moved closer to the light sensor **256**. The increased light sensed by the light sensor **256** causes increased current to be conducted by the light sensor **256** and the flow of current through the light sensor **256** causes current to flow from the collector **276** to the emitter **278**. Thus, as the intensity of the light impinging on the light sensor **256** increases, the current conducted by the light sensor **256** increases. This increase in current causes the voltage level presented by the voltage divider **280** to the timing signal generator **284** to increase. The increased signal is the variable speed signal and it causes the timing signal generator **284** to generate a timing signal in a known manner.

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In the depicted drill **100**, the timing signal generator **284** is a commonly known "555" timer, although other timing signal generators may be used.

The timing signal generator **284** generates a timing pulse having a logical on-state that corresponds to the level of the variable speed signal. This signal is presented to the gate **286** of the MOSFET **288**. When the signal present at the gate **286** is a logical on-state, the MOSFET **288** couples one of the motor terminals **238** to ground while the other motor terminal **238** is coupled to battery power through the main contact **272**. Thus, when the variable speed trigger switch **110** reaches a position where the light sensor **256** begins to detect reflected light and generate a variable speed signal, the timing signal generator **284** begins to generate a signal that causes the MOSFET **288** to couple one of the motor terminals **238** to ground. Once this occurs, current begins to flow through the MOSFET **288** and the motor **232** begins to rotate in the direction selected by the reversing button **112**.

The freewheeling diode **294** causes appropriate half-cycles of the current in the windings of the motor **232** to flow out of the motor **232**, through the diode **294**, and back into the motor **232** when the MOSFET **288** does not conduct in response to the timing signal being in the off-state. This action is known as freewheeling and is well known.

When the variable speed trigger **110** is in the full speed position, the timing signal is predominantly in the on-state and the bypass contact **296** closes. The closing of the bypass contact **296** enables the battery current to continuously flow through the motor **232** so that the motor **232** rotates at the highest speed.

When rotation is no longer desired, the operator releases the variable speed trigger switch **110** and the spring **264** causes the variable speed trigger switch **110** to rotate about the pivot **266** causing the bypass contact **296** to open. Additionally, the brake contact **298** closes thereby coupling the motor terminals **238**. The coupling of the two motor terminals **238** to one another through the brake contact **298** enables dynamic braking of the motor.

The electronic control of the tool **100** thus requires less space for the components that generate the variable speed signal than prior art control systems. Because the distance traveled by the variable speed trigger switch **110** does not have to be matched by the light signal generator **274** and the light sensor **256**, considerable space efficiency is gained. Additionally, the light signal generator **274** and the light sensor **256** do not require moving parts, so reliability is improved as well. Advantageously, the light signal generator **274** and the light sensor **256** may be mounted on the same printed circuit board **234** on which the timing signal generator **284** is mounted.

As the drill **100** is operated, the bit **300** is subjected to axial forces. The axial forces may result from, for example, pressure applied by the operator or by an impact on the bit. In either instance, the articulating gear system **180** is protected from damage without increasing the bulk of the components within the articulating gear system **180**. This is accomplished by directing axial forces from the bit **300** to the main housing portion **102** of the drill **100** while bypassing the articulating gear system. With initial reference to FIG. **27**, an impact on the bit **300** tends to move the bit **300** further into the drill **100**, or to the left as depicted in FIG. **27**. In prior art designs, not only could such a force damage the gear system, but the steel balls used to retain the bit within the bit holder would frequently jam necessitating replacement of the collet locking device.

As shown in FIG. **27**, however, the cylinder pin **146** is positioned such that the tail portion **304** of the bit **300** will

contact the cylinder pin 146 before the wall of the notched area 302 contacts the steel balls 150. Thus, an axial impact will not cause the steel balls 150 to jam. Of course, the cylinder pin 146 must be made from a material sufficient to withstand the axial impact. In accordance with one embodiment, the cylinder pin 146 is made of AISI 4135 steel.

Referring now to FIG. 4, in the event of an axial impact, the force is transferred from the cylinder pin 146 to the bit holder 130. The axial force is transmitted from the bit holder 130 to the bearing 132 which is located within the bearing pocket 134. Accordingly, the axial force is transferred into the flange 152 (see also FIG. 5) of the head housing 136. The head housing 136 in this embodiment is made from aluminum alloy A380 so as to be capable of receiving the force transmitted by the bearing 132. The force is subsequently transferred to the frame 190 and into the rib 228 of the main housing portion 102.

More specifically, two paths for the transfer of axial forces are provided around the articulating gear system 180. The first path predominantly transfers axial forces when the head housing 136 is axially aligned with the main housing portion 102. In this configuration, axial forces pass from head housing 136 to the frame 190 primarily through the recess 212 where the head housing 136 engages the frame 190 about the hole 188 (see FIG. 4) and at the shroud portion 210 where the head housing 136 engages the frame 190 outwardly of the base of the bevel gear 196.

The second path predominantly passes axial forces when the head housing 136 is at a ninety degree angle with respect to the main housing portion 102. In this configuration, axial forces are again transferred from the cylinder pin 146 to the bit holder 130. The axial forces then pass primarily from the teeth 216 in the well 214 of the head housing 136 to the teeth 218 on the articulation button 120 and then to the teeth 224 in the main housing portion 102.

When the head housing 136 is neither completely aligned with the main housing portion 102 or at a ninety degree angle with respect to the main housing portion 102, axial forces generally pass through both of the foregoing pathways. Accordingly, the effect of axial forces on the articulating gear system 180 of the drill 100 are reduced. Because the articulating gear system 180 is thus protected, the articulating gear system 180 may be constructed to be lighter than other articulating gear systems.

In one embodiment, a printed circuit board which may be used in the drill 100 or another power tool includes a circuit that provides vibratory feedback to the operator as shown in FIG. 30. The vibratory feedback circuit 308 includes a microcontroller 310, a driver circuit 312, and motor interface circuit 314. The driver circuit 312 in this embodiment is an integrated circuit that generates driving signals for a half-bridge circuit from a single pulse width modulated (PWM) signal, a torque limit indicating signal, which may be the same signal as the PWM signal, and a motor direction control signal. The driver circuit 312 may be a half bridge driver, such as an Allegro 3946, which is available from Allegro Microsystems, Inc. of Worcester, Mass.

The output of the driver circuit 312 is connected to a motor 316 through two transistors 318 and 320 which may be MOSFETs, although other types of transistors may be used. The transistor 318 may be connected to either terminal of the motor 316 through switches 322 and 324 while the transistor 320 may be connected to either terminal of the motor 316 through switches 326 and 328. A shunt resistor 330 is coupled between the transistor 320 and electrical ground. The high potential side of the resistor 330 is coupled to the microcontroller 310 through an amplifier 332. A power source 334 is

also provided in the vibratory feedback circuit 308 and a maximum torque reference signal is provided from a torque reference source 336 which may be a linear potentiometer such as the linear potentiometer 254.

The half-bridge control of the motor 316 eliminates the need for a freewheeling diode because the driver circuit 312 generates motor interface circuit signals for selectively operating the motor interface circuit 314 to control the rotational speed of the motor 316. More specifically, a variable speed control signal 338, which may be from a trigger potentiometer or the like, is provided to the microcontroller 310 for regulation of the rotation of the motor 316 by the microcontroller 310. Based upon the variable speed control signal 338, the microcontroller 310 generates a PWM signal that is provided to the driver circuit 312. In response to the PWM signal, the driver circuit 312 turns transistors 318 and 320 on and off.

During typical operations, the transistor 318 is the complement of the transistor 320 such that when the transistor 320 is on, the transistor 318 is off. The rate at which the transistor 320 is turned on and off determines the speed of motor 316. The direction of rotation of the motor 316 is determined by the position of the switches 322, 324, 326 and 328 under the control, for example, of a reversing switch.

The current through the motor 316 is provided through the transistor 320 and the resistor 330 to electrical ground when the transistor 320 is in the on-state. This current is related to the torque at which the motor 316 is operating. Thus, the voltage at the high potential side of the resistor 330 is related to the torque on the motor 316. This motor torque signal is amplified by the amplifier 332 and provided to the microcontroller 310. The microcontroller 310 compares the amplified motor torque signal to the torque limit signal established by the torque reference source 336. The torque limit signal, which may alternatively be provided by a different type of torque limit signal generator, provides a reference signal to the microcontroller 310 that corresponds to a current through the motor 316 that represents a maximum torque setting for the motor 316.

In response to the microcontroller 310 receiving a motor torque signal that exceeds the maximum torque setting for the motor 316, the microcontroller 310 generates a braking signal that is provided to the driver circuit 312. In response to the braking signal, the driver circuit 312 turns transistor 320 to the off-state and leaves transistor 318 in the on-state. This enables regenerative current to dynamically brake the rotation of the motor 316.

As dynamic braking occurs, the torque experienced by the motor 316 decreases until the sensed torque is less than the maximum torque setting for the motor 316. The microcontroller 310 then returns the transistor 320 to the on-state, thereby rotating the motor 316 and increasing the torque experienced by the motor 316. In this manner, the motor 316 alternates between rotating and dynamically braking which causes the tool to vibrate and alert the operator that the torque limit has been reached. An effective frequency for providing this vibratory feedback is 30 Hz. The torque limit indicating signal that results in this operation continues as long as the trigger remains depressed. Alternatively, the microcontroller may be programmed to generate the torque limit indicating signal for a fixed duration and then to stop to reduce the likelihood that the motor will be overpulsed.

In one embodiment, vibratory feedback is provided for the drill 100 with the circuit shown in FIG. 31. The vibratory feedback circuit 340 includes a microprocessor 342, an H-bridge driver circuit 344 and a motor interface circuit 346. Four MOSFETs 348, 350, 352 and 354 control power to the motor 232 from the rechargeable battery pack 106 under the

control of the H-bridge driver circuit **344**. A shunt resistor **356** is provided between the MOSFETs **352** and **354** and electrical ground. The signal at the high potential side of the resistor **356** corresponds to the torque being generated by the motor **232**. This motor torque signal is amplified by an amplifier circuit **358**, which may be implemented with an operational amplifier as shown in FIG. **31**, and provided to the microcontroller **342**. The microcontroller **342** compares the motor torque signal to the torque limit signal and generates a torque limit indicating signal in response to the motor torque signal being equal to or greater than the torque limit signal. The torque limit indicating signal may have a rectangular waveform.

In one embodiment, the microcontroller **342** provides a torque limit indicating signal that is a rectangular signal having an off-state of at least 200 μ seconds at a frequency of approximately 30 Hz. This torque limit indicating signal causes the driver circuit **344** to generate motor interface control signals that disconnect power from the motor **232** and couple the MOSFETs **348**, **350**, **352** and **354** together so the current within the windings of the motor **232** flows back through the motor **232** to dynamically brake the motor **232**.

The dynamic braking causes the motor **232** to stop. Before application of the next on-state pulse, the microcontroller inverts the signal to the direction control input of the H-bridge driver **344**. Thus, the subsequent on-state of the rectangular pulse causes the H-bridge driver circuit **344** to operate the H-bridge to couple the motor **232** to the rechargeable battery pack **106** with a polarity that is the reverse of the one used to couple the motor **232** and the rechargeable battery pack **106** prior to braking. This brake/reverse/start operation of the motor at the 30 Hz frequency causes the tool to vibrate in a manner that alerts the operator that the torque limit has been reached while preventing the bit from continuing to rotate during the clutching operation. The dynamic braking may also be used without inverting the signal.

In yet another embodiment, the rectangular waveform may be generated for a fixed duration, for example, 10 to 20 pulses, so the motor is not over-pulsed. Also, the microcontroller **342** may invert the direction control signal to the H-bridge driver **344** during the off-time of the rectangular waveform so that the motor **232** starts in the opposite direction each time. This action results in the net output rotation being zero during the clutching duration. Additionally, the microcontroller **342** may disable the clutching function in response to the motor direction control signal indicating reverse, rather than forward, operation of the motor **232**.

FIGS. **32A** and **32B** show an embodiment of a circuit used in a tool that eliminates the need for mechanical contacts. The circuit **360** includes an optical speed control switch **362**, a two position forward/reverse switch **364**, a microcontroller **366**, a driver circuit **368**, an H-bridge circuit **370**, a motor **372**, a shunt resistor **374**, a motor torque signal amplifier **376**, and a torque limit signal generator **378**. In this embodiment, power is coupled to the motor **372** through the H-bridge circuit **370**, but the main contact, brake contact, and bypass contact are no longer required. Thus, this embodiment significantly reduces the number of components that are subject to mechanical wear and degradation. Because the optical control switch **362**, microcontroller **366**, driver circuit **368**, H-bridge circuit **370**, and torque signal amplifier **376** may all be implemented with integrated circuits, then ICs may be mounted on a common printed circuit and the space previously occupied by the mechanical contacts and variable signal potentiometer are gained. This construction further enables the tool components to be arranged in more efficient geometries.

In the circuit **360**, the optical speed control switch **362** operates as described above to generate a variable control

signal from the reflection of an optical signal directed at the reflective surface of a pivoting trigger. The variable speed control signal is provided to the microcontroller **366** for processing. The microcontroller **366**, which may be a microcontroller available from Texas Instruments and designated by part number MSP430, is programmed with instructions to generate a PWM pulse with an on-state that corresponds to the level of the variable speed signal. The microcontroller **366** provides the PWM signal to the driver circuit **368** for generation of the four motor interface control signals used to couple battery power to the motor **372**. The direction in which the motor **372** is driven is determined by the contacts in the two position forward/reverse switch **364** through which a signal is provided to the microcontroller **366**. In the circuit **360**, the contacts of the two position forward/reverse switch **364** do not need to carry the current provided to the motor **372** so the contacts of the two position forward/reverse switch **364** may be smaller than contacts in other systems. The directional signal is also provided by the microcontroller **366** to the driver circuit **368** so the driver circuit **368** is capable of two directional control of current in the H-bridge circuit **370**.

The motor torque signal amplifier **376** provides the torque signal from the high potential side of the shunt resistor **374** to the microcontroller **366**. The torque limit signal generator **378** may be implemented with a potentiometer as described above to provide a reference signal for the microcontroller **366**. When the microcontroller **366** determines that the motor torque signal equals or exceeds the motor torque limit, the microcontroller **366** generates a torque limit indicating signal so the driver circuit **368** generates the motor interface control signals that operate the motor **372** in a manner that causes vibration. For the TD340 driver circuit, the torque limit indicating signal generated by the microcontroller **366** is a rectangular signal having an off-state of at least about 200 μ seconds at a frequency of about 30 Hz.

While the present invention has been illustrated by the description of exemplary processes and system components, and while the various processes and components have been described in considerable detail, applicant does not intend to restrict or in any limit the scope of the appended claims to such detail. Additional advantages and modifications will also readily appear to those skilled in the art. The invention in its broadest aspects is therefore not limited to the specific details, implementations, or illustrative examples shown and described. Accordingly, departures may be made from such details without departing from the spirit or scope of applicant's general inventive concept.

The invention claimed is:

1. An articulating hand power tool, comprising:
 - a main housing having a longitudinal axis;
 - a head portion rotatably engaged with the main housing for rotation within a plane which includes the longitudinal axis of the main housing and placement at a plurality of angles with respect to the longitudinal axis of the main housing;
 - an integrated circuit board located within the main housing;
 - at least one controller accessible from outside of the main housing for controlling the integrated circuit board;
 - a bit holder rotatably mounted in the head portion;
 - a motor within the main housing; and
 - an articulating gear system operably coupled to the motor and the bit holder for transferring force between the motor and the bit holder at each of the plurality of angles with respect to the longitudinal axis of the main housing.

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2. The power tool of claim 1, wherein:
the at least one controller comprises a movable reflective surface; and
the integrated circuit board comprises
an optical signal generator for generating an optical signal directed toward the reflective surface, and
a speed control signal generator for generating a variable speed control signal that corresponds to a reflection of the generated optical signal reflected by the reflective surface.
3. The power tool of claim 2, wherein the moveable reflective surface is located on a trigger switch which extends outwardly from the main housing.
4. The power tool of claim 3, further comprising:
a finger platform extending from the main housing adjacent to the trigger switch.
5. The power tool of claim 1, further comprising a finger platform extending from the main housing, wherein:
the at least one controller comprises a button slidable within the finger platform between a first and a second position; and
the integrated circuit board includes a slide switch for selecting the direction of rotation of the bit holder, the slide switch mechanically linked to the button such that when the button is moved from the first position to the second position the slide switch is moved from a third position to a fourth position.
6. The power tool of claim 1, wherein the at least one controller comprises:
a first controller for controlling the speed of a motor housed within the main housing; and
a second controller for controlling the maximum amount of torque placed upon the motor, the first and second controller defining an axis generally parallel to the longitudinal axis of the main housing.
7. The power tool of claim 6, wherein the integrated circuit board extends generally parallel to the longitudinal axis of the main housing.
8. The power tool of claim 7, wherein:
the at least one controller further comprises a third controller for controlling the direction of rotation of a rotatable bit holder within the head portion, wherein each of the first, the second and the third controller lie generally in the plane.
9. The power tool of claim 1, further comprising:
an automatic spindle lock system within the head portion and coupled to the bit holder and the articulating gear system; and
a planetary gear system within the main housing and coupled to the motor and the articulating gear system.
10. The power tool of claim 9, wherein:
the articulating gear system comprises a motor side pinion gear coupled to an output pinion gear through a bevel gear which is enmeshed with the output pinion gear;
the motor side pinion gear is coupled to the planetary gear system and the motor side pinion gear, the planetary gear system and the motor are axially aligned within the main housing; and
the output pinion gear is coupled to the automatic spindle lock system and each of the output pinion gear, the automatic spindle lock system and the bit holder are axially aligned with the head portion.
11. The power tool of claim 10, wherein:
the main housing defines a recess for receiving at least a portion of a battery pack; and

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- the integrated circuit board extends within the main housing adjacent to the recess, the planetary gear system, and the motor.
12. A hand power tool comprising:
a longitudinally extending main housing;
a head portion configured to be engaged with the main housing at a plurality of angles with respect to the longitudinal axis of the main housing, each of the plurality of angles within a single plane;
an articulation gear system for providing motive force to a bit holder in the head portion including a motor side pinion gear having an axis of rotation generally parallel to a longitudinal axis of the housing and an output pinion gear having an axis of rotation generally parallel to a longitudinal axis of the head portion, wherein the motor side pinion gear is operatively connected to the output side pinion gear through a bevel gear;
a controller operable from outside of the main housing and located generally on the plane; and
an integrated circuit located within the main housing and responsive to the controller.
13. The hand power tool of claim 12, wherein the controller comprises a reflective surface and the integrated circuit comprises:
an optical signal generator for generating an optical signal directed toward the reflective surface, and
a speed control signal generator for generating a variable speed control signal that corresponds to a reflection of the generated optical signal reflected by the reflective surface.
14. The hand power tool of claim 12, wherein the controller comprises a clutch control and the integrated circuit comprises:
an H-bridge circuit for providing power to a motor;
a linear potentiometer for generating a motor torque limit signal;
a microcontroller for generating a dynamic braking signal in response to a signal indicative of the torque of the motor being equal to or greater than the torque limit signal; and
a driver circuit for generating dynamic braking signals for the H-bridge circuit corresponding to the dynamic braking signal.
15. The hand power tool of claim 12, wherein the integrated circuit comprises:
a variable speed signal generator for controlling the speed of a motor;
a linear potentiometer for generating a motor torque limit signal to limit the torque of the motor; and
a reversing switch for controlling the direction of rotation of the motor, wherein the variable speed signal generator, the linear potentiometer and the reversing switch are located generally within the plane.
16. The hand power tool of claim 15, wherein the controller comprises a trigger switch for controlling the variable speed signal generator, the trigger switch extending from the main housing and pivotable within the plane.
17. The hand power tool of claim 16, further comprising:
a finger platform extending from the main housing and located within the plane adjacent to the trigger switch.
18. The hand power tool of claim 17, further comprising:
a button operable from outside of the main housing and extending within the finger platform, the button operably connected to the reversing switch for controlling the position of the reversing switch.

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19. A method of operating a hand power tool comprising:
 rotating a head portion of the power tool within a plane
 including the longitudinal axis of a main housing of the
 power tool to one of a plurality of angles with respect to
 the longitudinal axis; 5
 moving a variable speed trigger switch located outside of
 the main housing;
 generating a variable speed signal with an integrated circuit
 located within the main housing in response to the move- 10
 ment of the variable speed trigger;
 controlling the speed of a motor located within the main
 housing based upon the variable speed signal; and
 transferring motive force from the motor to a component
 within the head portion. 15

20. The method of claim 19, wherein transferring motive
 force from the motor to a component within the head portion
 comprises:
 rotating a first pinion gear using the motor;
 rotating a bevel gear using the first pinion gear; 20
 enmeshing the first pinion gear with the bevel gear;
 rotating a second pinion gear using the bevel gear;
 enmeshing the second pinion gear with the bevel gear; and
 rotating a bit holder within the head portion using the
 second pinion gear.

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21. The method of claim 20, further comprising:
 positioning a clutch control located outside of the housing;
 and
 generating a motor torque limit signal based upon the posi-
 tion of the clutch control using the integrated circuit,
 wherein controlling the speed of the motor comprises
 controlling the speed of the motor based upon the torque
 limit signal.

22. The method of claim 21, further comprising:
 positioning a reversing control located outside of the hous-
 ing;
 generating a motor direction signal based upon the position
 of the reversing control using the integrated circuit; and
 controlling the direction of rotation of the motor based
 upon the motor direction signal.

23. The method of claim 19, wherein rotating the head
 portion of the power tool comprises:
 disengaging a plurality of teeth on an articulation button
 from a plurality of teeth in the main housing while the
 head portion is in a first position;
 rotating the articulation button with the head portion from
 the first position to a second position; and
 engaging the plurality of teeth on the articulation button
 with the plurality of teeth on the main housing while the
 head portion is in the second position.

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