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**Yensho**

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

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**F16D 33/00** (2006.01)
- (52) **U.S. Cl.** ..... **192/3.29**
- (58) **Field of Classification Search** ..... 192/3.28-3.3, 192/70.16, 70.19  
See application file for complete search history.

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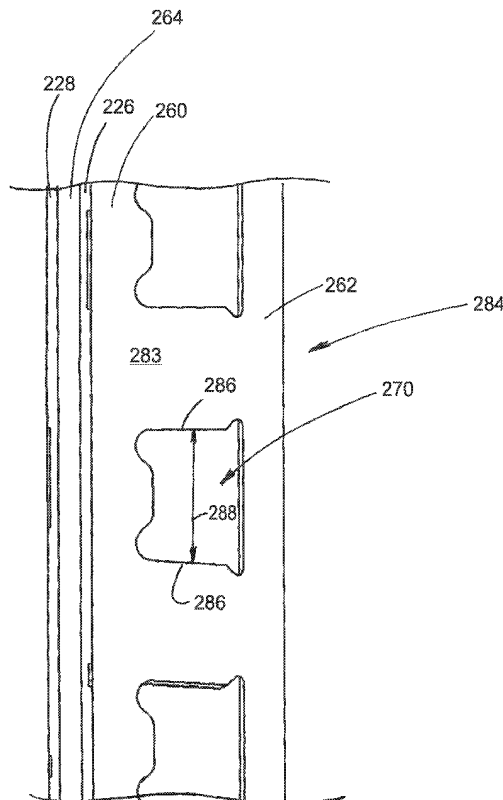
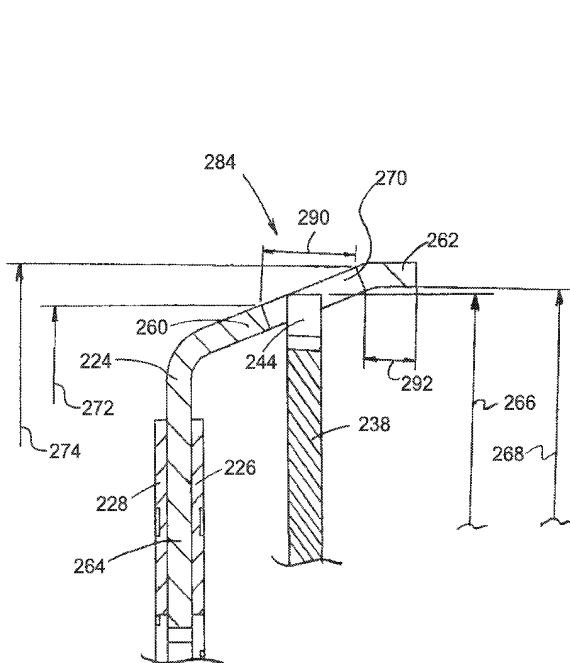
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(57) **ABSTRACT**  
A torque converter clutch assembly including a torque converter cover drivingly engaged with a prime mover, a piston plate for engaging the clutch; a drive plate; and a drive ring drivingly engaged with the drive plate. The drive ring has a continuous ring-shaped segment at its outer circumference, and a radial friction wall. The drive plate is disposed axially between the radial friction wall and the ring-shaped segment. In some example embodiments of the invention, the drive plate includes at least one tab with an outer diameter and the ring-shaped segment includes an inner diameter larger than the tab outer diameter.

**12 Claims, 5 Drawing Sheets**



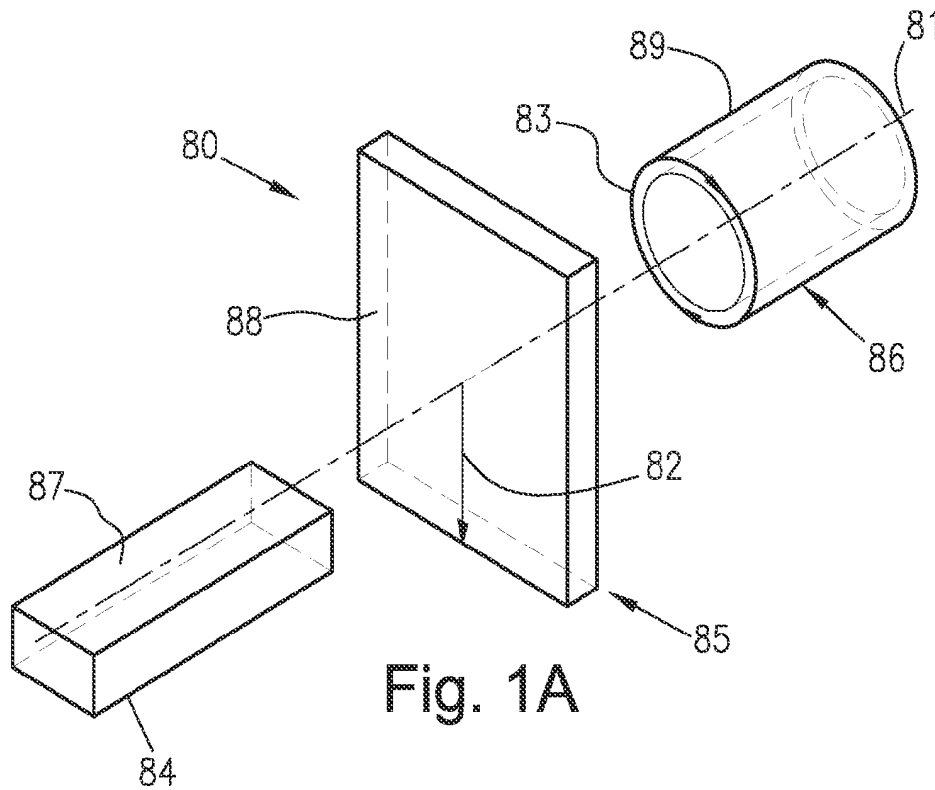


Fig. 1A

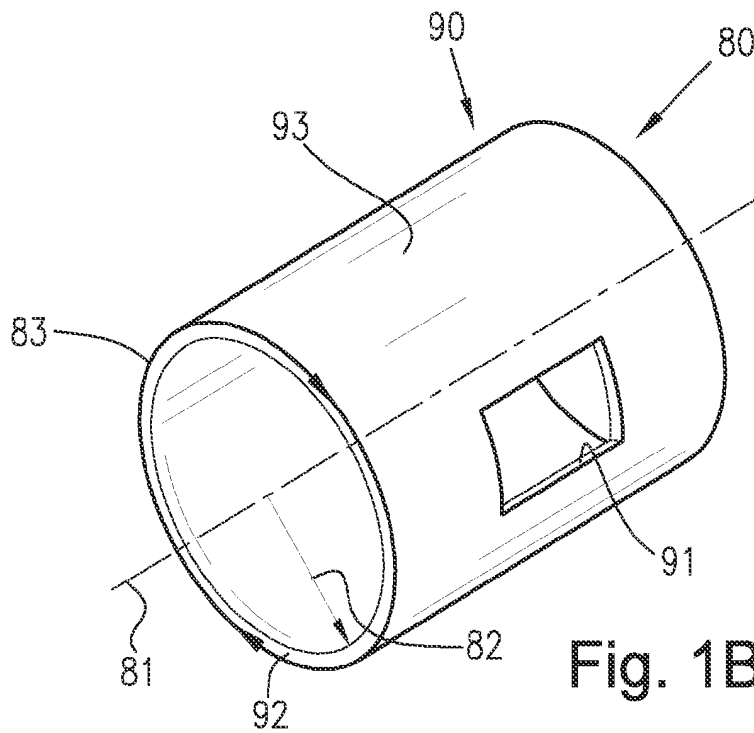


Fig. 1B

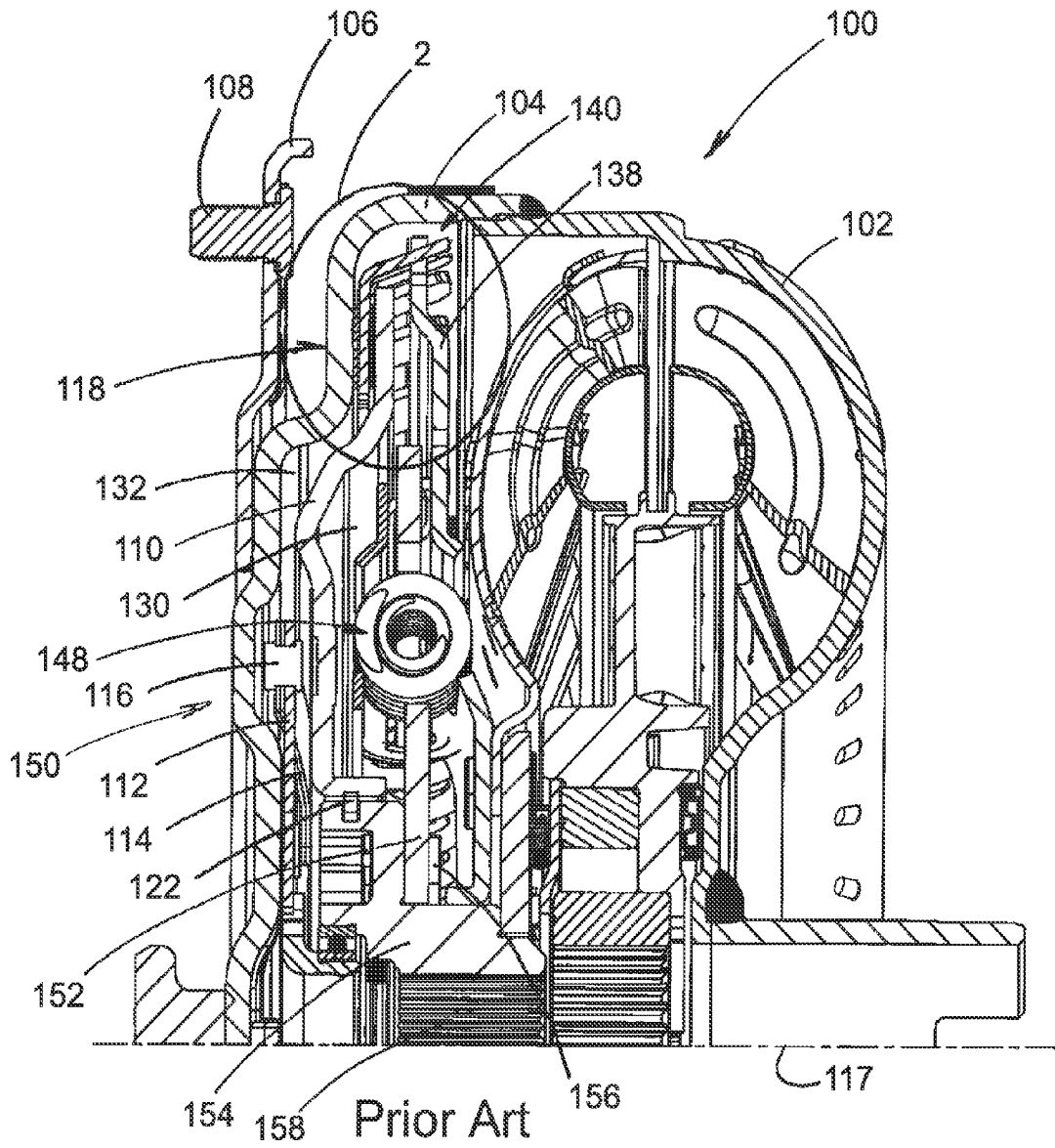


Fig. 2

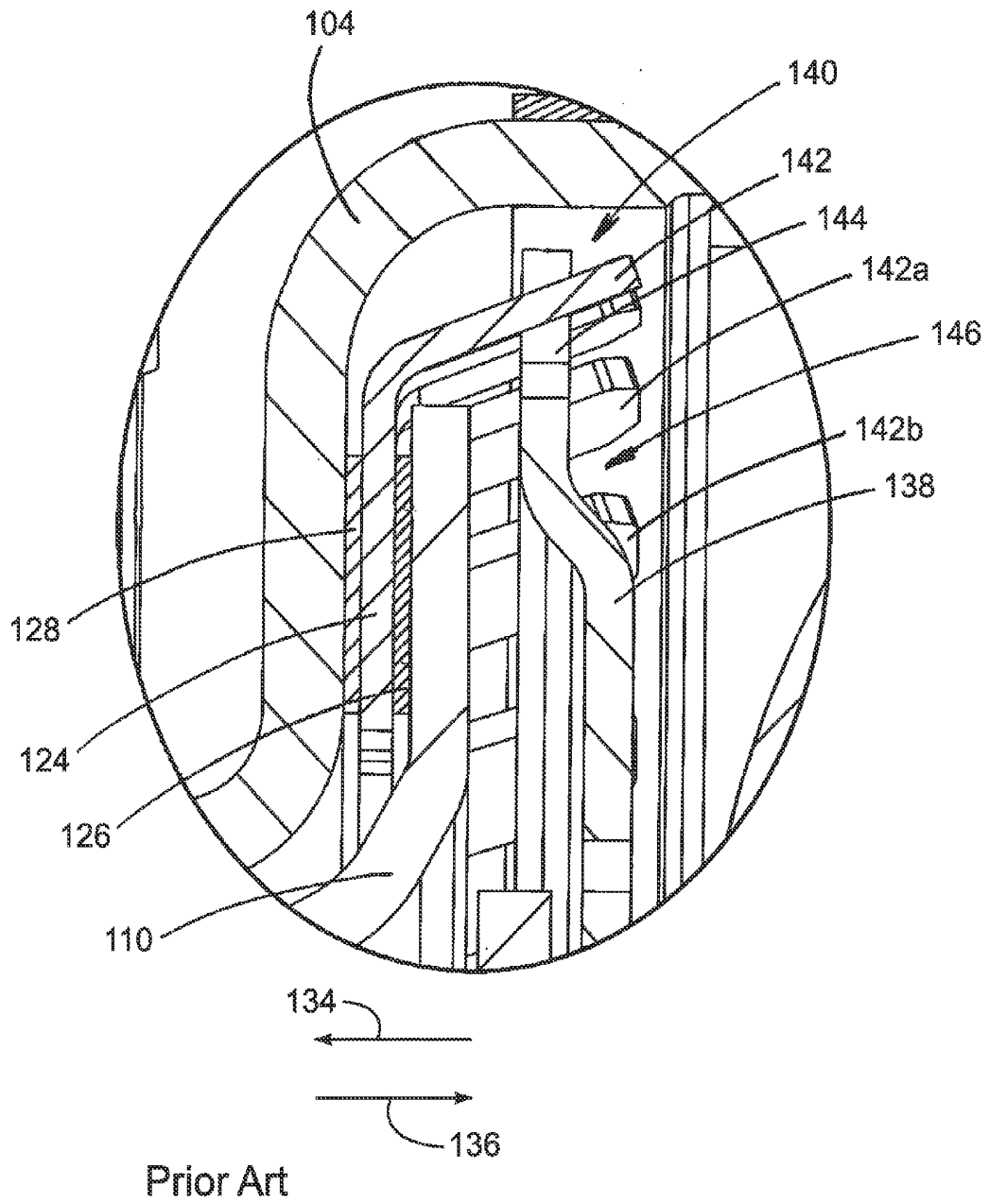
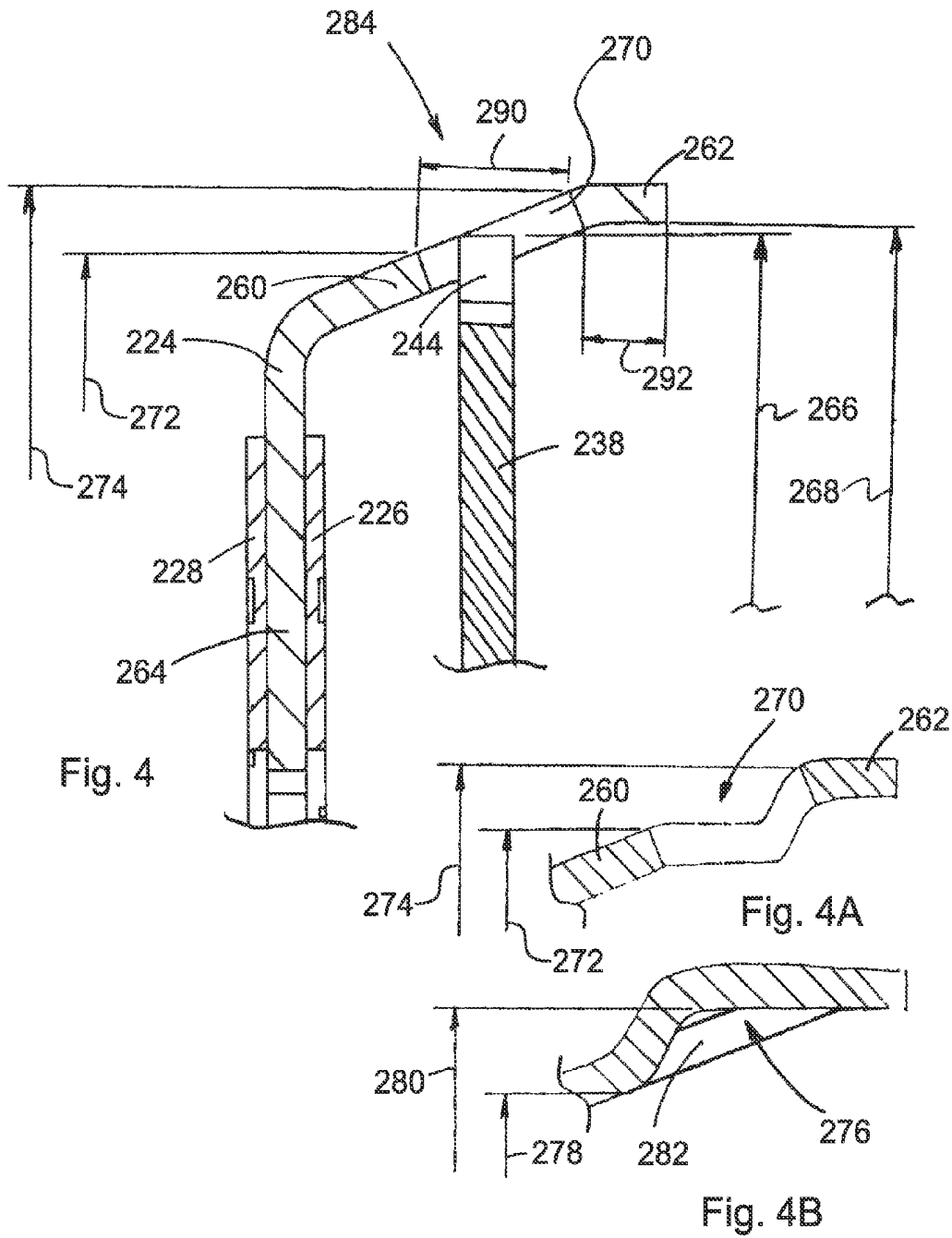


Fig. 3



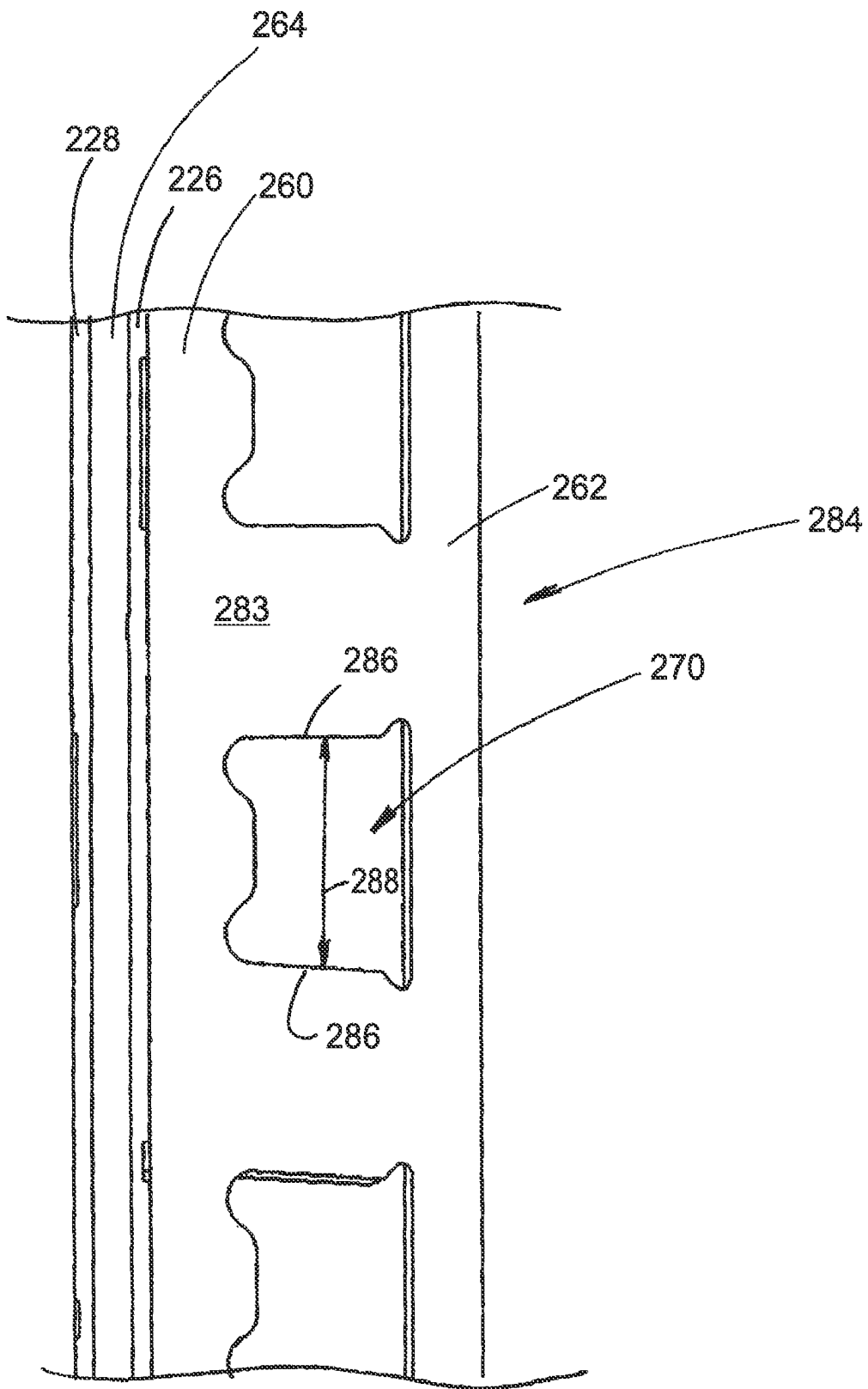


Fig. 5

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**CLUTCH PLATE WITH SLOTS**CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED  
APPLICATIONS

This application claims the benefit under 35 U.S.C. §119 (e) of U.S. Provisional Application No. 61/237,423, filed Aug. 27, 2009 which application is incorporated herein by reference.

## FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The invention relates generally to a clutch assembly for a torque converter, and more specifically to a clutch plate with slots.

## BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Clutch housings with slots are known. One example is shown in commonly owned US Patent Publication 2007/0193850.

## BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Example aspects of the present invention broadly comprise a torque converter clutch assembly including a torque converter cover drivingly engaged with a prime mover, a piston plate for engaging the clutch, a drive plate, and a drive ring drivingly engaged with the drive plate. The drive ring has a continuous ring-shaped segment at its outer circumference, and a radial friction wall. The drive plate is disposed axially between the radial friction wall and the ring-shaped segment. In some example embodiments of the invention, the drive plate includes at least one tab with an outer diameter and the ring-shaped segment includes an inner diameter larger than the tab outer diameter.

In an example embodiment of the invention, the drive ring includes at least one slot for engaging the at least one drive plate tab. The radial height of the slot varies in an axial direction. In another example embodiment of the invention, the drive ring includes at least one recess for engaging the at least one drive plate tab. The radial depth of the recess varies in an axial direction. The at least one recess includes a lanced edge for engaging the at least one drive plate tab and the radial height of the lanced edge varies in an axial direction.

In some example embodiments of the invention, the drive ring includes at least one friction ring bonded to the radial friction wall. In an example embodiment of the invention, the drive ring includes two friction rings disposed on axially opposing surfaces of the radial friction wall.

Other example aspects of the present invention broadly comprise a drive ring for a torque converter clutch including a radial friction wall, an axial ring circumferentially continuous around an outer circumference of the drive ring, and a tab engagement section. The tab engagement section includes a plurality of slots for rotationally engaging a plurality of drive plate tabs. The tab engagement section is disposed between the radial friction wall and the axial ring.

In an example embodiment of the invention, the tab engagement section has a conical shape. The axial ring has an inner diameter and the axial ring inner diameter is greater than an outer diameter for the plurality of drive plate tabs. The tab engagement section has a first axial length and the axial ring comprises a second axial length less than the first axial length. In an example embodiment of the invention, the drive ring further includes at least one friction ring bonded to the radial friction wall.

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Other example aspects of the present invention broadly comprise a method of forming a drive ring for a torque converter clutch including the steps of piercing a blank having an outer diameter, piercing an inner diameter out of the blank, punching a tab engagement slot at a predetermined distance inside of the outer diameter, and axially forming the drive ring so that a radial height of the slot varies in an axial direction.

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The nature and mode of operation of the present invention will now be more fully described in the following detailed description of the invention taken with the accompanying drawing figures, in which:

FIG. 1A is a perspective view of a cylindrical coordinate system demonstrating spatial terminology used in the present application;

FIG. 1B is a perspective view of an object in the cylindrical coordinate system of FIG. 1A demonstrating spatial terminology used in the present application;

FIG. 2 is a cross-sectional view of a prior art torque converter;

FIG. 3 is a detail view of encircled region 3 in FIG. 2;

FIG. 4 is a partial section view of a drive ring and drive plate assembly according to an example aspect of the invention;

FIG. 4A is a partial section view of an alternative embodiment of the drive ring shown in FIG. 4;

FIG. 4B is a partial section view of an alternative embodiment of the drive ring shown in FIG. 4; and

FIG. 5 is a radially outward view of the drive ring of FIG. 4.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

At the outset, it should be appreciated that like drawing numbers appearing in different drawing views identify identical, or functionally similar, structural elements. Furthermore, it is understood that this invention is not limited only to the particular embodiments, methodology, materials and modifications described herein, and as such may, of course, vary. It is also understood that the terminology used herein is for the purpose of describing particular aspects only, and is not intended to limit the scope of the present invention, which is limited only by the appended claims.

Unless defined otherwise, all technical and scientific terms used herein have the same meaning as commonly understood to one of ordinary skill in the art to which this invention belongs. Although any methods, devices or materials similar or equivalent to those described herein can be used in the practice or testing of the invention, the following example methods, devices, and materials are now described.

FIG. 1A is a perspective view of cylindrical coordinate system **80** demonstrating spatial terminology used in the present application. The present invention is at least partially described within the context of a cylindrical coordinate system. System **80** has a longitudinal axis **81**, used as the reference for the directional and spatial terms that follow. The adjectives "axial," "radial," and "circumferential" are with respect to an orientation parallel to axis **81**, radius **82** (which is orthogonal to axis **81**), and circumference **83**, respectively. The adjectives "axial," "radial" and "circumferential" also are regarding orientation parallel to respective planes. To clarify the disposition of the various planes, objects **84**, **85**, and **86** are used. Surface **87** of object **84** forms an axial plane. That is, axis **81** forms a line along the surface. Surface **88** of object **85** forms a radial plane. That is, radius **82** forms a line

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along the surface. Surface **89** of object **86** forms a circumferential plane. That is, circumference **83** forms a line along the surface. As a further example, axial movement or disposition is parallel to axis **81**, radial movement or disposition is parallel to radius **82**, and circumferential movement or disposition is parallel to circumference **83**. Rotation is with respect to axis **81**.

The adverbs “axially,” “radially,” and “circumferentially” are with respect to an orientation parallel to axis **81**, radius **82**, or circumference **83**, respectively. The adverbs “axially,” “radially,” and “circumferentially” also are regarding orientation parallel to respective planes.

FIG. 1B is a perspective view of object **90** in cylindrical coordinate system **80** of FIG. 1A demonstrating spatial terminology used in the present application. Cylindrical object **90** is representative of a cylindrical object in a cylindrical coordinate system and is not intended to limit the present invention in any manner. Object **90** includes axial surface **91**, radial surface **92**, and circumferential surface **93**. Surface **91** is part of an axial plane, surface **92** is part of a radial plane, and surface **93** is part of a circumferential plane.

The following description is made with reference to FIGS. 2-3. FIG. 2 is a cross-sectional view of a prior art torque converter. FIG. 3 is a detail view of encircled region 3 in FIG. 2. Prior art torque converter **100** includes pump **102** and cover **104**. Cover **104** is drivingly engaged with a prime mover (not shown) using any means known in the art. For example, cover **104** may be engaged to a flexplate of a combustion engine (not shown) through stud plate **106** and studs **108**.

Piston plate **110** is drivingly engaged with cover **104** through drive plate **112** and leaf springs **114**. Drive plate **112** is fixedly attached to cover **104** by riveting, for example. Each of leaf springs **114** is secured to piston plate **110** at a first end and drive plate **112** at a second end. Leaf springs **114** may be secured to drive plate **112** by rivet **116**, for example. Axial flexibility of leaf springs **114** allow movement of piston **110** along torque converter central axis **117**.

Piston plate **110** is arranged to engage clutch assembly **118**. Piston plate **110** is sealed to hub **154** with dynamic seal **122** and to drive ring **124** with friction ring **126**. Drive ring **124** is sealed to cover **104** with friction ring **128**. Therefore, piston plate **110** divides apply chamber **130** and release chamber **132**. When pressure in apply chamber **130** exceeds pressure in release chamber **132**, piston plate **110** is urged in direction **134** to engage clutch **118**. Likewise, when pressure in chamber **132** is higher, piston plate **110** is urged in direction **136** and clutch **118** is disengaged.

Drive ring **124** is engaged with drive plate **138** at tabbed connection **140**. Drive ring **124** includes angular tabs **142** and drive plate **138** includes radial tabs **144**. Tabs **142** are discontinuous about a circumference of drive ring **124**. That is, at least one circumferential gap **146** is present between adjacent tabs, for example, tabs **142a** and **142b**. Therefore, individual tabs such as tabs **142a** and **142b** are free to displace radially when torque converter **100** is rotated about axis **117**.

Drive plate **138** is drivingly engaged with spring assembly **148** of damper **150**. Spring assembly **148** is drivingly engaged with flange **152** which is, in turn, fixedly attached to output hub **120** by rivet **156**, for example. Output hub **120** is engaged with an input shaft for a transmission (not shown) at spline **158**. Therefore, when clutch **118** is engaged, torque is transferred from cover **104** through clutch **118** and damper **148** to the input shaft (not shown).

The following description is made with reference to FIGS. 4-5. FIG. 4 is a partial section view of a drive ring and drive plate assembly according to an example aspect of the invention. FIG. 4A is a partial section view of an alternative

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embodiment of the drive ring shown in FIG. 4. FIG. 4B is a partial section view of an alternative embodiment of the drive ring shown in FIG. 4. FIG. 5 is a radially outward view of the drive ring of FIG. 4. The discussion of torque converter **100** in the description of FIGS. 2 and 3 is generally applicable to FIGS. 4 and 5, except as noted. In general, drive ring **224** and drive plate **238** are drivingly engaged together and function similar to drive ring **124** and drive plate **138** described supra, except as explained infra.

Drive ring **224** includes portion **260** and ring-shaped segment, or axial wall, **262**. Portion **260** and ring-shaped segment **262** are continuous about their respective circumferences. That is, there are no gaps, for example, similar to gaps **146** in FIG. 3, in portion **260** or ring-shaped segment **262**. Ring **224** includes radial friction wall **264**. Portion **260** is proximate radial friction wall **264**. In an example embodiment of the invention, friction rings **226** and **228** are bonded to radial friction wall **264**. Drive plate **238** is disposed axially between radial friction wall **264** and ring-shaped segment **262**.

Drive plate **238** includes radial tab **244** with outer diameter **266**. Ring-shaped segment **262** has inner diameter **268**. Diameter **268** is larger than diameter **266** leaving radial clearance between ring **262** and tab **244** so that drive plate **238** can be axially assembled with drive ring **224**. In an example embodiment of the invention shown in FIGS. 4 and 4A, drive ring **224** includes slot **270**. Slot **270** includes varying radial heights **272** and **274**. That is, the radial height of slot **270** varies along axis **117** (FIG. 2).

In an example embodiment of the invention shown in FIG. 4B, drive ring **224** includes recess **276**. Recess **276** includes varying radial depths **278** and **280**. That is, the radial depth of recess **276** varies along axis **117** (FIG. 2). In an example embodiment of the invention, recess **276** includes lanced edge **282** for engaging tab **244** of drive plate **238**. As shown, lanced edge **282** is depicted as sharing varying radial heights **278** and **280** with recess **276**. It should be understood that other embodiments (not shown) may include independent varying radial heights for edge **282**.

Slots **270** and connectors **283** between slots comprise tab engagement section **284** disposed between radial friction wall **264** and axial ring **262**. Tab engagement section **284** is discontinuous around its circumference at slots **270**. In an example embodiment of the invention shown in FIG. 4, engagement section **284** has a conical shape. Slots **270** each comprise a pair of radial walls **286** (FIG. 5). Walls **286** are circumferentially offset by distance **288**. Distance **288** is larger than a circumferential width (not shown) of tab **244** for drive plate **238** allowing assembly of tab **244** with slot **270**.

In an example embodiment of the invention, tab engagement section **284** comprises axial length **290** and axial ring **262** comprises axial length **292**. Length **290** is greater than length **292**.

The present invention also includes a method of forming a drive ring for a torque converter clutch comprising the steps of piercing a blank having an outer diameter, piercing an inner diameter out of the blank, punching a tab engagement slot at a predetermined distance inside of the outer diameter, and axially forming the drive ring so that a radial height of the slot varies in an axial direction.

Of course, changes and modifications to the above examples of the invention should be readily apparent to those having ordinary skill in the art, without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention as claimed. Although the invention is described by reference to specific preferred and/



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or example embodiments, it is clear that variations can be made without departing from the scope or spirit of the invention as claimed.

What I claim is:

1. A torque converter clutch assembly comprising:
  - a piston plate for engaging a clutch;
  - a drive plate; and
  - a drive ring drivingly engaged with the drive plate, the drive ring comprising:
    - a continuous ring-shaped segment at an outer circumference of the drive ring; and
    - a radial friction wall, wherein:
      - the continuous ring-shaped segment forms a radially outermost end of the drive ring, the radially outermost end continuous in a circumferential direction; and,
      - the drive plate is disposed axially between the radial friction wall and the ring-shaped segment.
2. The torque converter clutch assembly of claim 1 wherein the drive plate comprises at least one tab with an outer diameter and the ring-shaped segment comprises an inner diameter larger than the tab outer diameter.
3. The torque converter clutch assembly of claim 2 wherein the drive ring comprises at least one slot, wholly surrounded by the drive ring, for engaging the at least one drive plate tab.
4. The torque converter clutch assembly of claim 3 wherein the at least one slot has a radial height varying in an axial direction.
5. The torque converter clutch assembly of claim 2 wherein the drive ring comprises at least one recess for engaging the at least one drive plate tab.
6. The torque converter clutch assembly of claim 5 wherein a radial depth of the recess varies in an axial direction.
7. The torque converter clutch assembly of claim 5 wherein the at least one recess includes a lanced edge for engaging the at least one drive plate tab, the radial height of the lanced edge varying in an axial direction.
8. The torque converter clutch assembly of claim 2 wherein the drive ring comprises at least one friction ring bonded to the radial friction wall.
9. The torque converter clutch assembly of claim 2 wherein the drive ring comprises two friction rings disposed on axially opposing surfaces of the radial friction wall.
10. The torque converter clutch assembly of claim 1 wherein the drive ring includes a conically-shaped tab engagement section, including a plurality of slots:
  - wholly surrounded by the drive ring; and
  - disposed between the radial friction wall and the continuous ring-shaped segment for rotationally engaging a plurality of drive plate tabs.

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11. A torque converter clutch assembly comprising:
  - a piston plate for engaging the clutch;
  - a drive plate including a plurality of radially outwardly projecting tabs; and
  - a drive ring drivingly engaged with the drive plate, the drive ring comprising:
    - a continuous ring-shaped segment at an outer circumference of the drive ring; and
    - a radial friction wall, wherein:
      - the continuous ring-shaped segment forms an edge of the drive ring extending furthest in an axial direction away from the radial friction wall, the edge continuous in a circumferential direction;
      - the continuous ring-shaped segment includes a plurality of slots passing through the material forming the ring-shaped segment to connect oppositely facing surfaces of the drive ring and wholly surrounded by the material forming the ring-shaped segment;
      - the plurality of radially outwardly projecting tabs are at least partially disposed in the plurality of slots; and,
      - the drive plate is disposed axially between the radial friction wall and the ring-shaped segment.
12. A torque converter clutch assembly comprising:
  - a piston plate for engaging the clutch;
  - a drive plate including a plurality of radially outwardly projecting tabs; and
  - a drive ring drivingly engaged with the drive plate, the drive ring comprising:
    - a continuous ring-shaped segment at an outer circumference of the drive ring;
    - a radial friction wall; and,
    - a portion directly connecting the continuous ring-shaped segment and the radial friction wall, wherein:
      - the continuous ring-shaped segment forms an edge of the drive ring extending furthest in an axial direction away from the radial friction wall, the edge continuous in a circumferential direction;
      - the portion includes a plurality of recesses facing radially inward;
      - the plurality of recesses does not pass through the material forming the ring-shaped segment and does not connect oppositely facing surfaces of the drive ring;
      - the plurality of radially outwardly projecting tabs are at least partially disposed in the plurality of recesses; and,
      - the drive plate is disposed axially between the radial friction wall and the ring-shaped segment.

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