

APPARATUS FOR PROPELLING A COIL CLAD HOSE

BACKGROUND OF THE DISCLOSURE

[0001] The present disclosure is directed to manipulation of flexible conduit, tubing and hoses. In particular, embodiments of the present disclosure are directed to an apparatus for extension and retraction of flexible conduit such as a helical coil clad high pressure hose and an apparatus for precise extension and retraction of a plurality of flexible conduits such as helical coil clad high pressure hoses used as flexible nozzle lances.

[0002] During water blast cleaning operations in fluid conduits such as a piping system, heat exchanger tubing, or sewer systems, high pressure hoses are often difficult to manipulate over distances. Various power driven mechanisms have been developed to address such difficulties. One such mechanism is disclosed in my United States Patent Application No.12/723,410, filed March 12, 2010 and published as US Patent Publication No. 2011/0220700.

SUMMARY OF THE DISCLOSURE

[0003] The present disclosure directly addresses such needs. An apparatus in accordance with the present disclosure for propelling a coil clad hose that includes a first driven pair of bull gears sandwiching a rotatable drive sprocket rotatably fixed to a first axle in a frame. The frame may be an open or closed protective housing. In an embodiment in which the coil clad hose passes through a passage through the frame or housing, this first axle is oriented orthogonal to and spaced from the passage through the housing. A second pair of bull gears sandwiching a second drive sprocket is rotatably fastened to a second axle parallel to the first axle in the housing. The second pair of bull gears mesh with the first pair of spaced bull gears. Both axles are aligned orthogonal to and spaced on opposite sides, and equidistant from, the passage through the housing. Teeth on the drive sprockets engage part of the coil clad fluid hose when the fluid hose is inserted into the passage. A slip clutch between the pairs of spaced bull gears and the drive sprocket on each of the axles adjusts frictional grip on the coil when one of the bull gears is driven to propel the hose through the passage. This clutch primarily limits the force transmitted through the sprocket teeth to the coil of the coil clad hose like a rack (the coil clad hose) and

pinion (the sprocket) arrangement. This arrangement can also protect the coil clad hose from buckling in case of encountering an obstacle or obstruction. This arrangement also allows the two sprockets to share the load transmitted to the hose equally and thus also to be synchronized.

[0004] In one aspect, a coil clad hose feed/propelling apparatus in accordance with one embodiment of the present disclosure includes a hollow housing having a pinion drive gear rotatably supported in the housing and the housing may include a through passage for receiving and passing a coil clad portion of a tubular body therethrough. Mounted in the housing is a first pair of spaced bull gears fixed to a first axle rotatably supported in a first portion of the hollow housing and oriented orthogonal to the through passage. One of the first pair of bull gears is engaged with the pinion drive gear. Also mounted in the housing is a second pair of spaced bull gears rotatably fastened to a second axle parallel to and spaced from the first axle. This second pair of spaced bull gears meshes with the first pair of spaced bull gears. A first drive sprocket is rotatably supported on the first axle and sandwiched between the first pair of bull gears. The first axle is spaced from the passage through the housing such that the first drive sprocket can engage part of the coil clad portion of the tubular body inserted into the passage. A second drive sprocket is rotatably supported on the second axle and sandwiched between the second pair of bull gears, and the second axle is spaced from the passage through the housing such that the second drive sprocket can engage another part of the coil clad portion of the tubular body inserted into the passage. A slip clutch is provided between the pairs of spaced bull gears and the drive sprockets on each of the axles.

[0005] Preferably the housing includes a first part supporting the first axle and a second part supporting the second axle, wherein the first and second parts of the housing together define the through passage for receiving the tubular body therethrough. The slip clutch has a first pair of slip clutch discs on the first axle sandwiching the first sprocket therebetween and a second pair of slip clutch discs on the second axle sandwiching the second sprocket therebetween. Alternatively slip clutch discs may be omitted in some applications and the gear and sprocket faces utilized directly as the slip clutch. The slip clutch may include one or more wave springs between the first drive sprocket and the first bull gear. The slip clutch may

include wave springs on each of the first and second axles between the first and second drive sprockets and the first and second bull gears.

[0006] The first and second drive sprockets are spaced apart by a distance corresponding to the coil clad portion of a tubular body inserted into the passage so that teeth on the sprockets engage diametrically opposite portions of the coil clad portion of the tubular body.

[0007] Another embodiment in accordance with another aspect of the present disclosure is an apparatus that includes a hollow housing having two separable parts defining a through passage between the parts of the housing for receiving therethrough a coil clad portion of a fluid hose. A first pair of spaced bull gears is rotatably fixed to a first axle rotatably supported orthogonally to and spaced from the through passage in a first part of the hollow housing. Preferably one of the first pair of bull gears is engaged with a pinion drive gear. A second pair of spaced bull gears is rotatably fastened to a second axle in the second part of the housing parallel to and spaced from the first axle and orthogonal to and spaced from the through passage. This second pair of spaced bull gears is positioned to mesh with the first pair of spaced bull gears when the separable parts of the housing are joined.

[0008] A first drive sprocket is rotatably supported on the first axle and sandwiched between the first pair of bull gears. The first axle is spaced from the passage through the housing such that the first drive sprocket can engage part of the coil clad portion of the fluid hose inserted into the passage. A second drive sprocket is rotatably supported on the second axle and sandwiched between the second pair of bull gears. The second axle is spaced from the passage through the housing such that the second drive sprocket can engage another part of the coil clad portion of the fluid hose inserted into the passage.

[0009] A drive mechanism for use with the present apparatus may include a liquid or pneumatic fluid motor or an electric motor. Such a motor preferably includes a pinion gear extending into the housing that engages one of the two first bull gears. In one embodiment the drive mechanism is supported by the housing and the pinion gear is rotatably supported in the first part of the housing.

[0010] This embodiment of the apparatus also has at least one slip clutch between the pairs of spaced bull gears and the drive sprockets on each of the axles.

Preferably the first pair of bull gears is keyed to the first axle so that they rotate with the axle. The first drive sprocket is not keyed to the first axle. It is free to rotate on the first axle. Preferably the slip clutch comprises a first pair of slip clutch discs on the first axle sandwiching the first sprocket therebetween. A second pair of slip clutch discs may be provided on the second axle sandwiching the second sprocket therebetween. In one embodiment the slip clutch may include one or more wave spring between the first drive sprocket and the first bull gear. The slip clutch may also include wave springs on each of the first and second axles between the first and second drive sprockets and the first and second bull gears.

[0011] In accordance with the present disclosure an embodiment of an apparatus for propelling a hose includes a hollow housing having a through passage for receiving a coil clad portion of a fluid hose. The apparatus includes a first pair of spaced bull gears rotatably fixed to a first axle rotatably supported orthogonal to and spaced from the through passage in a first part of the hollow housing. A second pair of spaced bull gears is rotatably fastened to a second axle in a second part of the housing parallel to and spaced from the first axle and spaced from the through passage, wherein the second pair of spaced bull gears is positioned to mesh with the first pair of spaced bull gears. A first drive sprocket is rotatably supported on the first axle and sandwiched between the pair of rotatably fixed bull gears. The first axle is spaced from the passage through the housing such that the first drive sprocket can engage part of the coil clad portion of the fluid hose when the fluid hose is inserted into the passage. A second drive sprocket is rotatably supported on the second axle and sandwiched between the second pair of bull gears, wherein the second axle is spaced from the passage through the housing such that the second drive sprocket can engage another part of the coil clad portion of the fluid hose inserted into the passage. The apparatus also includes a slip clutch between the pairs of spaced bull gears and the drive sprockets on each of the axles.

[0012] An exemplary apparatus in accordance with the present disclosure for propelling a plurality of coil clad hose assemblies includes a set of gear/sprocket modules, each configured to drive a single coil clad high pressure hose. In one embodiment, the gear/sprocket modules are assembled onto a common drive axle which in turn meshes with identical follower gear/sprocket modules such that each module pair (drive and follower) can operably sandwich a single coil clad high

pressure hose. Each module pair can drive the single coil clad high pressure hose synchronously with adjacent coil clad high pressure hoses in a common direction for insertion into and retraction out of parallel tubes to be cleaned.

[0013]As an example, utilizing a modular coil clad hose driving assembly in accordance with the present disclosure that has three interconnected module pairs, an operator can clean a heat exchanger tube sheet comprising an array of 36 parallel tubes in about a third of the time needed to position, insert and clean each of the tubes separately.

[0014]An exemplary modular assembly for accurately positioning and handling a plurality of coil clad hoses simultaneously includes a primary driven bull gear fixed to a drive shaft, a plurality of driven gear/sprocket modules fastened to the drive shaft, a primary follower bull gear rotatably mounted on a follower axle extending parallel to the drive shaft, wherein the primary follower bull gear meshes with the primary driven bull gear, and a second plurality of follower gear/sprocket modules fastened to the follower axle, each follower gear/sprocket module configured to mesh with a corresponding one of the driven gear/sprocket modules so as to accommodate and sandwich one of the coil clad hoses therebetween.

[0015]An apparatus for feeding and retracting coil clad portions of a plurality of high pressure hose assemblies in accordance with an embodiment includes a primary bull gear fastened to a driven drive axle and a follower bull gear rotatably fastened to a follower axle extending parallel to the drive axle. The follower bull gear meshes fully with the primary bull gear. A plurality of secondary bull gear/sprocket modules are fastened to each of the axles.

[0016]Each of the modules includes a secondary bull gear having teeth extending to a first outer diameter and a sprocket gear having teeth extending a distance less than the first outer diameter. The secondary bull gear teeth of modules on the drive axle mesh with corresponding secondary bull gear teeth of modules on the follower axle so as to define between adjacent meshed modules an opening width for receiving and passing therebetween a coil clad portion of a high pressure hose assembly. The sprocket gear teeth of corresponding meshed secondary bull gear/sprocket modules are spaced apart so as to engage the coil clad portion of the high pressure hose.

[0017] In one embodiment, the apparatus includes a drive mechanism coupled to a hollow housing having two separable parts defining a plurality of parallel through passages between the parts of the housing each for receiving therethrough a coil clad portion of a fluid hose. A primary bull gear in the housing is fastened to a drive axle connected to the drive mechanism. A follower bull gear is rotatably fastened to a follower axle extending parallel to the drive axle. This follower bull gear meshes with the primary bull gear. A plurality of secondary bull gear/sprocket modules in the housing are fastened to each of the axles. Each of the modules includes a secondary bull gear having teeth extending to a first outer diameter and a sprocket gear having teeth extending a distance less than the first outer diameter. The secondary bull gear teeth of modules on the drive axle mesh with corresponding secondary bull gear teeth of modules on the follower axle to define between adjacent modules an opening width for receiving and passing therebetween a coil clad portion of a high pressure hose assembly aligned with the passages through the housing. The sprocket gear teeth of corresponding secondary bull gear/sprocket modules are spaced apart so as to engage the coil clad portion of the high pressure hose assembly.

[0018] The apparatus according to this disclosure has several advantages. For example, mechanical sprocket engagement with the coils on the coil clad hose allows the hose to be pushed through the article to be cleaned without buckling. Kinking is avoided, friction is reduced, and longer distances may be achieved in tortuous passage. The use of the steel coil clad hose protects the hose cover from wear as it travels through the article to be cleaned and protects it as it encounters abrasive debris, sharp edges, and the like. This also provides positive positioning to enhance safety, productivity and uniformity of the cleaning operation.

[0019] Further features, advantages and characteristics of the embodiments of this disclosure will be apparent from reading the following detailed description when taken in conjunction with the drawing figures.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0020] FIG. 1 is an external perspective view of one exemplary embodiment of an assembled drive apparatus for linearly moving a coil clad hose in accordance with the present disclosure.

[0021] FIG. 2 is a separate exploded perspective view of the apparatus shown in Fig. 1.

[0022] FIG. 3 is a perspective view of the internals of the apparatus shown in Fig. 1 with the housing removed.

[0023] FIG. 4 is a partial perspective view of the upper driven portion of the apparatus shown in FIG. 3.

[0024] FIG. 5 is a perspective exploded view of an alternative embodiment of an apparatus in accordance with the present disclosure.

[0025] FIG. 6 is an external perspective view of one exemplary embodiment of an assembled drive apparatus for linearly moving a plurality of coil clad hose assemblies in accordance with the present disclosure.

[0026] FIG. 7 is a vertical sectional view of the apparatus shown in Fig. 6 taken along line 7-7 showing the internals of the apparatus with the housing removed.

[0027] FIG. 8 is an enlarged partial perspective view of the upper driven portion of the apparatus shown in FIG. 6.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0028] A perspective view of one exemplary embodiment of an apparatus **100** for propelling a coil clad hose **102** is shown in FIG. 1. The apparatus **100** includes a hollow two piece housing **104** to which is attached a fluid drive motor **106**. In this embodiment, the housing **104** is in four pieces. Housing **104** has an upper hollow box section **108** and a lower hollow box section **110** which are vertically bolted together with threaded bolts (not shown).

[0029] Each of upper and lower box sections **108** and **110** has a left half box segment **112** and **114** and a right half box segment **116** and **118** which are bolted together by horizontal housing bolts (not shown for clarity). When assembled, the housing **104** forms a rectangular box around a central passage **120** passing through the inside four corners of the box segments **112**, **114**, **116**, and **118**.

[0030] An exploded view of the apparatus **100** showing the operable internal parts of the apparatus **100** is shown in FIG. **2**. An assembled perspective view of the operable internal parts of the apparatus **100** with the housing **104** removed is shown in perspective in FIG. **3**.

[0031] Turning now to FIG. **2**, the internal parts of the upper housing section **108** are shown in an exploded fashion. A first pair of bull gears **122** and **124** is keyed onto a first axle **130** for rotation with axle **130**. These two bull gears **122** and **124** may move axially on the axle **130**, but are rotatably fixed such that they rotate with the axle **130**. Between these two bull gears **122** and **124** is a rotatable upper sprocket **126**. Between the sprocket **126** and each of the bull gears **122** and **124** is a slip clutch disc **128**. Thus the upper sprocket **126** is sandwiched between the bull gears **122** and **124** and each slip clutch disc **128** is sandwiched by the upper sprocket **126** and one of the bull gears **122** or **124**. The sprocket **126** is free to rotate on the axle **130**. On the other side of each of the bull gears **122** and **124** is a thrust washer **132** and a bearing **134** press/friction fit into each of the housing segment **112** or **116** that supports the axle **130** in the upper housing section **108**.

[0032] The axle **130** may have a bolt head on one end or both ends may be threaded. As is shown in FIG. **1**, both ends of axle **130** are threaded. Thus mounted on the axle **130**, from one end to the other, is first an adjustment nut **140**, a bearing **134**, a thrust washer **132**, a first bull gear **122**, a slip clutch **128**, a drive sprocket **126**, a slip clutch **128**, another first bull gear **124**, a thrust washer **132**, another bearing **134**, and an adjustment nut **140**.

[0033] Each of the slip clutches **128** may be a single or double friction disc set or may comprise a set of one or more wave springs depending on the friction required to transmit torque from the bull gears **122** and **124** to the freely rotatable drive sprocket **126** so that it rotates with the bull gears **122** and **124**. This torque is adjusted by tightening or loosening the adjustment nuts **140** on the threaded ends of the axle **130** which squeeze the components together to increase the frictional force on the sprocket **126**.

[0034] Each of the bull gears **122** and **124** has spur gear teeth that can mesh with a driven pinion gear **142** that is fastened to an end of a driven shaft from the drive motor **106**. In the embodiments illustrated, the pinion gear **142** is housed within

section **112** of the housing **104**. It is to be understood that this pinion gear **142** could be mounted to any one of the sections **112**, **114**, **116** or **118**.

[0035] A second set of bull gears **150** and **152** are rotatably mounted on another axle **154** in the lower housing section **110** in a similar manner except that bull gears **150** and **152** need not be rotatably fixed to the axle **154** as in the upper section **108** above described. The assembly on the lower axle **154** is best seen in FIG. 3. The assembly includes a second pair of bull gears **150** and **152** rotatably mounted on axle **154** and sandwiching a second drive sprocket **156** that is also rotatably mounted on axle **154**. A set of 2 slip clutches **128** sandwich the second drive sprocket **156**. Again, each of the slip clutches **128** may be made up of one or more friction discs or wave springs to provide sufficient frictional torque such that the drive sprocket rotates together with the bull gears **150** and **152** but if the torque required to drive the coil clad hose is great, the sprockets **128** and **156** can slip so as not to damage the coil clad hose being propelled through the passage **120**. Again, the friction applied by the slip clutches **128** is adjusted by tightening or loosening the nuts **140** as necessary to achieve proper applied force to the coil clad hose.

[0036] Since the coil clad hose **102** has a helical coil wrapped around the hose, the teeth **158** on each of the drive sprockets **126** and **156** are canted and hollow curved at an angle complementary to the pitch of the coil **160** wrapped around the hose **162** as is shown in FIG. 4. The curvature and cant of the teeth/grooves in the sprockets **156** and **126** match the helix of the wire coil **160**. The distance between the sprockets **126** and **156** is determined by the location and spacing between the axles **130** and **154**. In an embodiment having separable upper and lower housing sections **108** and **110**, dimensional variations in the coil clad hose may be accommodated by spacing the sections **108** and **110** apart appropriately. Alternatively different sized housings may be provided with different passage to axle spacings provided for each different size coil clad hose.

[0037] Another embodiment of an apparatus **200** is shown in the exploded view of FIG. 5. This embodiment **200** is identical to that shown in FIGS. 1-4 except for the structure of the slip clutches between the bull gears and drive sprockets. In this embodiment **200**, the drive sprocket **226** is rotatably mounted on a bushing **228** which is, in turn, rotatably mounted on the upper shaft **130**. The drive sprocket **226**

has a circumferential groove **230** on both opposite faces of the drive sprocket **226** each for receiving an O-ring **232** therein. Each bull gear **222** and **224** rotatably fixed on the axle **130** via keys **204** has a complementary circumferential groove **206** in its inside face for receiving the O-ring **232** adjacent the drive sprocket **226**. A set of wave springs **240** is sandwiched between the bull gear **222** and the sprocket **226** and bounded by the O-ring **232**. Another set of wave springs **240** is sandwiched between the bull gear **224** and the sprocket **226** and bounded by the other O-ring **232**. Grease is contained within the cavity formed by the sprocket **226**, bushing **228**, the O-rings **232** and the bull gear **222**. Similarly, grease is contained within the wave spring space between the sprocket **226**, bushing **228**, O-ring **232** and bull gear **224**.

[0038] The lower set of bull gears **250** and **252** sandwiching sprocket **256** on shaft **154** are similarly configured except that the bull gears **250** and **252** are not rotatably fixed on the axle **154**. As above, the sprocket **256** is mounted on a bushing **228** and has a circumferential groove **260** on both opposite faces of the drive sprocket **256** each for receiving an O-ring **232** therein. Each bull gear **250** and **252** is rotatably mounted on the axle **154** and each has a complementary circumferential groove **206** in its inside face for receiving the O-ring **232** adjacent the drive sprocket **226**. A set of wave springs **240** is sandwiched between the bull gear **250** and the sprocket **256** and bounded by the O-ring **232**. Another set of wave springs **240** is sandwiched between the bull gear **252** and the sprocket **256** and bounded by the other O-ring **232**. Grease is contained within the cavity formed by the sprocket **226**, bushing **228**, the O-rings **232** and the bull gear **250**. Similarly, grease is contained within the wave spring space between the sprocket **226**, bushing **228**, O-ring **232** and the bull gears **252**.

[0039] It is to be understood that various changes can be made to the apparatuses **100** and **200** in accordance with the present disclosure. The coil clad hose may have a helical coil pitch different than that shown in the Figures. For example, the coil clad hose may have a spaced apart pitch similar to that shown in my prior application No. 12/723,410.

[0040] For example, the housing **104** may be hinged between sections **108** and **110** so as to provide a clamshell type enclosure around a coil clad hose to be propelled.

The coil clad hose may have a different spacing between the helical coil wraps than as illustrated in the figures. Thus any helix structure around a hose, cable or other conduit may be gripped by an appropriately configured drive sprocket set **126** and **156** in an alternative embodiment of the apparatus in accordance with the present disclosure.

[0041] A perspective view of an exemplary embodiment of an apparatus **600** for propelling a plurality of coil clad hose assemblies **602** (3) is shown in FIG. **6**. Each of the hose assemblies **602** preferably terminates in a rotary nozzle to form a flexible lance designed to be repetitively inserted into an article to be cleaned, such as one of an array of parallel tubes in a heat exchanger bundle.

[0042] The apparatus **600** includes a hollow two piece housing **604** to which is attached a fluid drive motor **608** and position encoder/rotary transducer/rotary transmitter **606**. The position encoder **606** provides precise position indication for the set of hoses **602** being manipulated. The position information allows an operator, or an automatic controller, to safely and efficiently cover the intended range of cleaning motion, or stroke, without over-travel. Over-travel at either end of the cleaning stroke is a hazard to personnel, causes damage to the lance, and wastes time and water.

[0043] In this exemplary embodiment, the housing **604** is in two rectangular box sections. Housing **604** has an upper hollow box section (not shown) and a lower hollow box section **610** which are vertically bolted together with threaded bolts (also not shown). When assembled, the housing **604** forms a rectangular box around a set of three central passages **612** passing through the housing **604**.

[0044] The apparatus **600** includes a primary bull gear **614** fastened to a driven drive axle **616** supported by ball bearing **618** in the upper hollow box section of the housing **604**. A follower bull gear **620** is rotatably fastened to a follower axle **622** extending parallel to the drive axle **616** in the lower box section **610**. This follower bull gear **620** meshes with the primary bull gear **614**.

[0045] A plurality of secondary bull gear/sprocket modules **624** are fastened to each of the primary bull gears **614** and **620**. In this illustrated embodiment **600** shown in FIGS. **6-8**, there are three modules **624** fastened to the primary bull gear **614** on the driven axle **616** via bolts **625** and three modules **624** fastened to the follower bull gear **620**. Each of the modules **624** has a secondary bull gear **626** having teeth **628**

extending to a first outer diameter and a sprocket gear **630** having teeth **632** extending a distance less than the first outer diameter. The secondary bull gear teeth **628** of modules **624** fastened on the drive axle **616** via bolts **625** to the primary bull gear **614** fully mesh with corresponding secondary bull gear teeth **628** of modules **624** fastened to the follower axle **622** via follower bull gear **620** via bolts **625**. These meshing teeth **628** define between adjacent modules **624** an opening width for receiving and passing therebetween a coil clad portion **640** of a high pressure hose assembly **602**.

[0046] The sprocket gear teeth **632** on each sprocket gear **630** of corresponding secondary bull gear/sprocket modules **624** are spaced apart so as to each engage one of the coil turns **642** of the coil clad portion **640** of the high pressure hose assembly **602**. Each tooth **632** on each sprocket gear has a central recessed portion **644** (See FIG. 7) to accommodate passage of the high pressure hose without engaging the surface of the high pressure hose. In operation, the aligned pairs of facing teeth **632** engage each of the turns **642** of the coil clad portion **640**. The outer portions of each tooth **632** adjacent each of the recessed portions **644** engage and apply the thrust to the coil clad portion **640** of the hose assembly **602** while permitting the hose to pass with a slight clearance to accommodate presence of some debris on the hose and minimize abrasion of the hose surface.

[0047] The housing **604** includes openings **612** aligned with the sprocket gears **630** to facilitate passage of the coil clad high pressure hose assembly **602** therethrough. Preferably a sleeve **646**, one of which is shown in FIG. 6, within the opening **612** guides passage of the hose assembly **602** through the side walls of the housing **604**. An extended guide/conduit/sheath attached to each sleeve then conducts the advancing lance to the article being cleaned, and the retracting lance to a storage reel. This guide/conduit/sheath protects the operator from high pressure jets and contact with the traveling flexible lance.

[0048] The primary bull gear **614** is preferably keyed to the drive axle **616**. The driven modules **624** are preferably bolted to the primary bull gear **614**. They may be alternatively keyed to the driven axle **616** in alternative embodiments. The secondary bull gear/sprocket modules **624** on the follower axle **622** are bolted to the primary bull gear **620** as is shown.

[0049] The coil clad hose assembly **602** preferably includes a high pressure hose **650** and coil **640** of turns **642** of flat spring music wire wrapped around the body of the hose such that each turn of the coil **140** compressively engages the outer surface of the hose. This compressive engagement ensures that no slippage of the coil **640** along the hose length takes place. This condition is necessary so that the indexer **608** can accurately correlate axle and gear rotation with hose position.

[0050] It is to be understood that various changes can be made to the apparatus **600** in accordance with the present disclosure. The coil clad hose assembly **602** may have a helical coil pitch different than that shown in the Figures. For example, the coil clad hose may have a spaced apart pitch similar to that shown in my prior application No. 12/723,410.

[0051] The housing **604** may be hinged between sections **608** and **610** so as to provide a clamshell type enclosure around a set of coil clad hose assemblies to be propelled. Each of the coil clad hoses may have a different spacing between the helical coil wraps than as illustrated in the figures. Thus any helix structure around a hose, cable or other conduit may be gripped by an appropriately configured module **624** in an alternative embodiment of the apparatus in accordance with the present disclosure. The drive motor **606** may be hydraulic, pneumatic or electrical.

[0052] In the embodiment illustrated, there are three pairs or sets of modules **624** for manipulation of three hose assemblies **602**. This embodiment **600** is merely exemplary. Any number of sets of modules **624** may be stacked together and fastened to the bull gears **614** and **620** on the axles **616** and **622**. As presently envisioned, a practical limitation of about 10 modules **624** are envisioned to be attached to a drive **606** so as to handle up to 10 hose assemblies **602** at the same time.

[0053] All such changes, alternatives and equivalents in accordance with the features and benefits described herein, are within the scope of the present disclosure. Such changes and alternatives may be introduced without departing from the spirit and broad scope of my invention as defined by the claims below and their equivalents.

What is claimed is:

1. An apparatus for feeding and retracting coil clad portions of one or more high pressure hose assemblies, the apparatus comprising:

a primary bull gear fastened to a driven drive axle;

a follower bull gear rotatably fastened to a follower axle extending parallel to the drive axle; the follower bull gear meshing with the primary bull gear;

one or more secondary bull gear/sprocket modules fastened to each of the axles, each of the modules having a secondary bull gear having teeth extending to a first outer diameter and a sprocket gear having teeth extending a distance less than the first outer diameter, wherein the secondary bull gear teeth of each one of the modules on the drive axle mesh with corresponding secondary bull gear teeth of the modules on the follower axle to define between adjacent bull gears an opening width for receiving and passing therebetween a coil clad portion of a high pressure hose assembly, and wherein the sprocket gear teeth of corresponding secondary bull gear/sprocket modules are spaced apart so as to engage opposite portions of the coil clad portion of the high pressure hose therebetween.

2. The apparatus according to claim 1 wherein each tooth on each sprocket gear has a central recessed portion to accommodate passage of the high pressure hose.

3. The apparatus according to claim 1 further comprising a housing containing the primary bull gear, the follower axle and the plurality of secondary bull gear/sprocket modules.

4. The apparatus according to claim 3 wherein the housing includes openings aligned with the sprocket gears to facilitate passage of the coil clad high pressure hose therethrough.

5. The apparatus according to claim 1 wherein the primary bull gear is keyed to the drive axle.

6. The apparatus according to claim 1 wherein only the primary bull gear is fixed to the drive axle and the secondary bull gear/sprocket modules on the drive axle are bolted to the primary bull gear.

7. The apparatus according to claim 1 wherein there are three secondary bull gear/sprocket modules fastened to the primary bull gear and three secondary bull gear/sprocket modules fastened to the follower bull gear.

8. The apparatus according to claim 7 wherein each tooth on each sprocket gear has a central recessed portion to accommodate passage of the high pressure hose.

9. The apparatus according to claim 8 further comprising a housing containing the primary bull gear, the follower axle and the plurality of secondary bull gear/sprocket modules.

10. The apparatus according to claim 9 wherein the housing includes openings aligned with the sprocket gears to facilitate passage of the coil clad high pressure hose therethrough.

11. An apparatus comprising:

a drive mechanism;

a hollow housing having two separable parts defining one or more parallel through passages between the parts of the housing each for receiving therethrough a coil clad portion of a fluid hose;

a primary bull gear in the housing fastened to a drive axle connected to the drive mechanism;

a follower bull gear rotatably fastened to a follower axle extending parallel to the drive axle; the follower bull gear meshing with the primary bull gear;

one or more secondary bull gear/sprocket modules in the housing fastened to each of the axles, each of the modules having a secondary bull gear having teeth extending to a first outer diameter and a sprocket gear having teeth extending a distance less than the first outer diameter, wherein the secondary bull gear teeth of the one or more secondary modules on the drive axle mesh with corresponding secondary bull gear teeth of a module on the follower axle to define between

adjacent bull gears an opening width for receiving and passing therebetween a coil clad portion of a high pressure hose aligned with the one or more passages through the housing, and wherein the sprocket gear teeth of the one or more corresponding secondary bull gear/sprocket modules are spaced apart so as to engage the coil clad portion of the high pressure hose.

12. The apparatus according to claim 11 wherein each tooth on each sprocket gear has a central recessed portion to accommodate passage of the high pressure hose.

13. The apparatus according to claim 11 wherein the primary bull gear is keyed to the drive axle.

14. The apparatus according to claim 11 wherein only the primary bull gear is fixed to the drive axle and each of the secondary bull gear/sprocket modules on the drive axle are bolted to the primary bull gear.

15. The apparatus according to claim 11 wherein there are three secondary bull gear/sprocket modules fastened to the primary bull gear and three secondary bull gear/sprocket modules fastened to the follower bull gear.

16. The apparatus according to claim 15 wherein each tooth on each sprocket gear has a central recessed portion to accommodate passage of the high pressure hose.

17. The apparatus according to claim 11 wherein the coil clad hose includes a flat wire coil spring wrapped around the high pressure hose.

18. An apparatus for feeding and retracting one or more high pressure hoses, each having a flat wire spring wrapped therearound compressively engaging the high pressure hose, the apparatus comprising:

- a drive mechanism;

- a primary bull gear fastened to a drive axle connected to the drive mechanism;

a follower bull gear rotatably fastened to a follower axle extending parallel to the drive axle; the follower bull gear meshing with the primary bull gear;

one or more secondary bull gear/sprocket modules fastened to each of the axles, each of the modules having a secondary bull gear having teeth extending to a first outer diameter and a sprocket gear having teeth extending a distance less than the first outer diameter, wherein the secondary bull gear teeth of the one or more modules on the drive axle mesh with corresponding secondary bull gear teeth of the one or more modules on the follower axle to define between adjacent bull gears an opening width for receiving and passing therebetween a high pressure hose having the flat wire spring wrapped around the high pressure hose, wherein the sprocket gear teeth of corresponding secondary bull gear/sprocket modules are spaced apart so as to engage the flat wire spring wrapped around the high pressure hose.