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(71) Applicant *(for all designated States except US)*: **INTEL CORPORATION** [US/US]; 2200 Mission College Boulevard, Santa Clara, CA 95052 (US).

(72) Inventor; and

(75) Inventor/Applicant *(for US only)*: **ELZUR, Uri** [IL/IL]; Hashomer Street 78, 30900 Zichron Yaakov (IL).

(74) Agent: TROP, Timothy, N.; Trop, Pruner, Hu & Miles, P.C., Suite 100, 8554 Katy Freeway, Houston, TX 77024 (US).

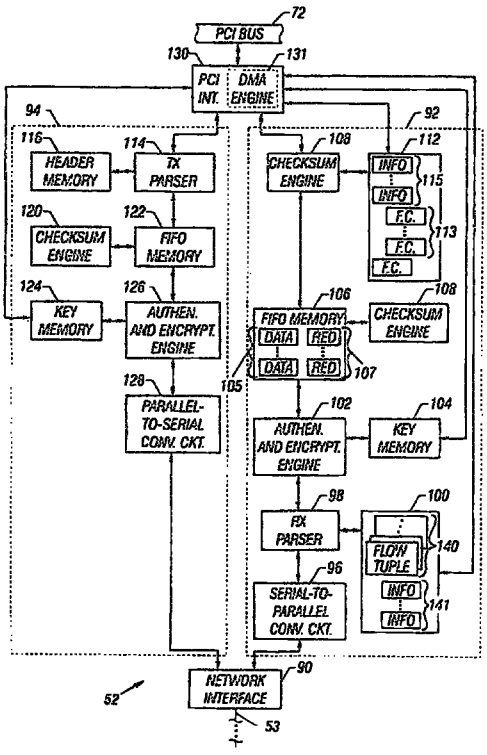
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(54) Title: PARSING A PACKET HEADER



(57) Abstract: A packet (140) is received that includes a header. The header indicates at least one characteristic that is associated with a layer of a protocol stack. The packet is parsed with a network controller (52) to extract the characteristic(s), and a handle is passed from the network controller (52) to the protocol stack to indicate the characteristic(s). The computer system (50) may be capable of executing software of a protocol stack to extract the characteristic(s) of the packet, and the apparatus (50) may include an interface (90) and a circuit (98). The interface (90) may be adapted to receive the packet, and the circuit (98) may be adapted to parse the header to extract the characteristic(s) without causing the computer (50) to execute the software and process the packet based on the extracted characteristic(s).

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