

MULTI-STROKE MECHANISM WITH AUTOMATIC END OF STROKE RETRACTION

Cross Reference to Related Applications

[0001] The present application is a continuation in part of U.S. Pat. Appln Ser. No. 10/673,930 entitled "SURGICAL STAPLING INSTRUMENT INCORPORATING A FIRING MECHANISM HAVING A LINKED RACK TRANSMISSION", to Jeffrey S. Swayze, Frederick E. Shelton IV, filed 29 September 2003, the disclosure of which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety.

[0002] The present application is related to commonly-owned U.S. Pat. Appln. Ser. No. 11/052,387 filed on even date herewith, entitled "SURGICAL STAPLING INSTRUMENT INCORPORATING A MULTI-STROKE FIRING MECHANISM WITH RETURN SPRING ROTARY MANUAL RETRACTION SYSTEM", to F. Shelton, K. Doll, D. Hoffman, M. Setser, and J. Swayze, the disclosure of which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety.

Field of the Invention

[0003] The present invention relates in general to surgical stapler instruments that are capable of applying lines of staples to tissue while cutting the tissue between those staple lines and, more particularly, to improvements relating to stapler instruments and improvements in processes for forming various components of such stapler instruments that accomplish firing with multiple strokes of a trigger.

Background of the Invention

[0004] Endoscopic surgical instruments are often preferred over traditional open surgical devices since a smaller incision tends to reduce the post-operative recovery time and complications. Consequently, significant development has gone into a range of endoscopic surgical instruments that are suitable for precise placement of a distal end effector at a desired surgical site through a cannula of a trocar. These distal end effectors engage the tissue in a number of ways to achieve a diagnostic or therapeutic effect (e.g., endocutter, grasper, cutter, staplers, clip applier, access device, drug/gene therapy delivery device, and energy device using ultrasound, RF, laser, etc.).

[0005] Known surgical staplers include an end effector that simultaneously makes a longitudinal incision in tissue and applies lines of staples on opposing sides of the incision. The end effector includes a pair of cooperating jaw members that, if the instrument is intended for endoscopic or laparoscopic applications, are capable of passing through a cannula passageway. One of the jaw members receives a staple cartridge having at least two laterally spaced rows of staples. The other jaw member defines an anvil having staple-forming pockets aligned with the rows of staples in the cartridge. The instrument includes a plurality of reciprocating wedges which, when driven distally, pass through openings in the staple cartridge and engage drivers supporting the staples to effect the firing of the staples toward the anvil.

[0006] An example of a surgical stapler suitable for endoscopic applications is described in U.S. Pat. No. 5,465,895, which advantageously provides distinct closing and firing actions. Thereby, a clinician is able to close the jaw members upon tissue to position the tissue prior to firing. Once the clinician has determined that the jaw members are properly gripping tissue, the clinician can then fire the surgical stapler with a single firing stroke, thereby severing and stapling the tissue. The simultaneous severing and stapling avoids complications that may arise when performing such actions sequentially with different surgical tools that respectively only sever or staple.

[0007] One specific advantage of being able to close upon tissue before firing is that the clinician is able to verify via an endoscope that the desired location for the cut has been achieved, including that a sufficient amount of tissue has been captured between opposing jaws. Otherwise, opposing jaws may be drawn too close together, especially pinching at their distal ends, and thus not effectively forming closed staples in the severed tissue. At the other extreme, an excessive amount of clamped tissue may cause binding and an incomplete firing.

[0008] Generally, a single closing stroke followed by a single firing stroke is a convenient and efficient way to perform severing and stapling. However, in some instances, it would be desirable for multiple firing strokes to be required. For example, surgeons are able to select a length of staple cartridge for the desired length of cut from a range of jaw sizes. Longer staple cartridges require a longer firing stroke. Thus, to effect the firing, a hand-squeezed trigger is required to exert a larger

force for these longer staple cartridges in order to sever more tissue and drive more staples as compared to a shorter staple cartridge. It would be desirable for the amount of force to be lower and comparable to shorter cartridges so as not to exceed the hand strength of some surgeons. In addition, some surgeons, not familiar with the larger staple cartridges, may become concerned that binding or other malfunction has occurred when an unexpectedly higher force is required.

[0009] One approach for lowering the required force for a firing stroke is a ratcheting mechanism that allows a firing trigger to be stroked multiple times, as described in U.S. Pat. Nos. 5,762,256 and 6,330,965. These known surgical stapling instruments with multiple-stroke firing mechanisms do not have the advantages of a separate closure and firing action. Moreover, the ratcheting mechanism relies upon a toothed rack and driving pawl to achieve the ratcheting motion, with the length of a handle encompassing these components thus increased to accommodate the toothed rack. This increased length is inconvenient, given the close confines and increasing amount of equipment associated with a surgical procedure.

[0010] While these multiple firing strokes would have advantages, some features of a single firing stroke have advantages as well. For instance, a single-stroke firing trigger may be directly coupled to the firing mechanism even during release of the firing trigger. Thus, any spring bias on the single-stroke firing trigger assists in retracting the knife from the end effector. If binding occurs, the surgeon may urge the firing trigger outward to effect retraction since the firing trigger is directly coupled to the firing mechanism.

[0011] By contrast, the multiple-stroke firing trigger is uncoupled from the firing mechanism during return strokes. While a retraction bias force is advantageously incorporated to retract the knife from the staple applying assembly, this retraction force needs to be prevented from performing retraction of the knife before full firing travel is achieved.

[0012] Consequently, a significant need exists for a surgical stapling instrument having a multiple stroke firing mechanism that automatically retracts after full firing travel yet does not inadvertently retract between firing strokes.

Brief Summary of the Invention

[0013] The invention overcomes the above-noted and other deficiencies of the prior art by providing a surgical stapling and severing instrument that advantageously incorporates a multiple firing stroke handle that actuates a long end effector without undue manual force required by a surgeon. A firing member that transfers the firing force to the end effector is proximally biased to assist in retraction. To avoid retraction between firing strokes, an anti-backup mechanism binds the firing member when released by a firing mechanism. An anti-backup release mechanism consistent with aspects of the invention responds to full firing travel of the firing member by disabling the anti-backup release mechanism so that the firing member will retract.

[0014] In one aspect of the invention, a surgical instrument has an end effector that includes jaws of an elongate channel and a pivotally attached anvil that hold a staple cartridge and clamp tissue. The firing member causes stapling and severing of clamped tissue. A firing mechanism selectively engages a pawl into engagement with the firing member to distally move the firing member in a series of firing strokes of a firing trigger. Automatically retraction is facilitated by an anti-backup release lever tipping to the perpendicular a locking plate of an anti-backup mechanism that is biased to a nonperpendicular binding state against the firing member. The anti-backup release lever is cammed into this position in response to the firing member approaching full firing travel.

[0015] These and other objects and advantages of the present invention shall be made apparent from the accompanying drawings and the description thereof.

Brief Description of the Figures

[0016] The accompanying drawings, which are incorporated in and constitute a part of this specification, illustrate embodiments of the invention, and, together with the general description of the invention given above, and the detailed description of the embodiments given below, serve to explain the principles of the present invention.

[0017] FIG. 1 is a right side elevation view of a surgical stapling and severing instrument (traction biased pawl) in an open (start) condition, with a shaft partially cut away to expose a closure tube and firing rod.

- [0018] FIG. 2 is a left side elevation view taken along line 2-2 in longitudinal cross section of an end effector at a distal portion of the surgical stapling instrument of FIG. 1.
- [0019] FIG. 3 is a front perspective view of the end effector of FIG. 2.
- [0020] FIG. 4 is a perspective, exploded view of an implement portion of the surgical stapling and severing instrument of FIG. 1.
- [0021] FIG. 5 depicts a left side elevation view in section of the end effector of FIG. 3 of the surgical instrument of FIG. 1, the section generally taken along lines 5-5 of FIG. 3 to expose portions of a staple cartridge but also depicting the firing bar along the longitudinal centerline.
- [0022] FIG. 6 depicts a left side elevation view in section of the end effector of FIG. 5 after the firing bar has fully fired.
- [0023] FIG. 7 is a left side elevation view of the handle of the surgical stapling and severing instrument of FIG. 1 with a left handle housing removed.
- [0024] FIG. 8 is a perspective, exploded view of the handle of FIG. 7.
- [0025] FIG. 9 is a perspective view from an elevated, aft, left vantage point of the linked transmission firing mechanism of the handle of FIG. 7.
- [0026] FIG. 10 is a detail left side elevation view of the linked rack of the firing mechanism of FIG. 9.
- [0027] FIGS. 11-14 are left side elevation views in cross section generally along the longitudinal axis of the ramped central track of the linked rack and the pawl of the firing mechanism, and additionally showing the firing trigger, biasing wheel and ramp of the traction biasing mechanism, depicting a sequence during a firing stroke.
- [0028] FIG. 15 is a right-side elevation view partially disassembled to expose a distal portion of an anti-backup mechanism (lateral kick-out type) in a locked condition in the surgical stapling and severing instrument of FIG. 1.
- [0029] FIG. 16 is a perspective view from a top, aft, right vantage point of the anti-backup mechanism of FIG. 15 with the anti-backup cam tube removed.

[0030] FIG. 17 is a right-side elevation view partially disassembled to expose a distal portion of an anti-backup mechanism in an unlocked condition in the surgical stapling and severing instrument of FIG. 1.

[0031] FIG. 18 is a right-side elevation view partially disassembled to expose a distal portion of an anti-backup mechanism in an unlocked condition in the surgical stapling and severing instrument of FIG. 1.

[0032] FIG. 19 is a rear elevation view of the surgical stapling and severing instrument of FIG. 1 with the right half shell of the handle housing removed to expose the anti-backup release lever in phantom in a locking condition and in an unlocked condition.

[0033] FIGS. 20-25 are detail views of the anti-backup release lever of FIG. 18 depicting respectively a firing sequence of unfired, one firing stroke, two firing strokes, three firing strokes, returning or release button pushed, and fully returned.

[0034] FIGS. 26-27 are perspective views from a top, left, distal vantage point of the surgical stapling and severing instrument with the right half shell of the handle housing removed to expose a closure release lockout mechanism, respectively in an initial position with the lockout removed and the closure release button depressed, and then a lockout being activated during initial firing.

[0035] FIG. 28 is perspective view of a surgical stapling and severing instrument in an open condition similar to FIG. 1 but incorporating a top-accessible retraction lever.

[0036] FIG. 29 is a left side elevation view of the surgical stapling and severing instrument of FIG. 28 with the left half shell of the handle housing removed to expose an intermittently toothed indicator gear presenting a first dwell area to the idler gear.

[0037] FIG. 30 is a left side elevation view of the surgical stapling and severing instrument of FIG. 28 with the left half shell of the handle housing removed to expose an intermittently toothed indicator gear presenting a second dwell area to the idler gear.

[0038] FIG. 31 is a left front perspective view of an alternate surgical stapling and severing instrument (spring biased side pawl) with an alternate handle portion

including a first alternative (link triggered) automatic retraction and an alternative (ratcheting) manual retraction mechanism.

[0039] FIG. 32 is a right aft perspective view of the surgical stapling and severing instrument of FIG. 31 with a portion of an elongate shaft cut away and a right half shell of a handle housing removed to expose an automatic end-of-firing travel retraction mechanism and a manual firing retraction mechanism.

[0040] FIG. 33 is a right aft perspective disassembled view of the handle portion and an elongate shaft of the surgical stapling and severing instrument of FIG. 31.

[0041] FIG. 34 is right aft perspective view of the surgical stapling and severing instrument of FIG. 31 with a right half shell and outer portions of the implement portion removed to expose the closure and firing mechanisms in an initial state.

[0042] FIG. 35 is a right side view in elevation of the partially disassembled surgical stapling and severing instrument of FIG. 34.

[0043] FIG. 36 is a right aft perspective view of the partially disassembled surgical stapling and severing instrument of FIG. 34 with a closure mechanism closed and clamped and the side pawl firing mechanism completing a first stroke and with a manual retraction mechanism removed to expose a distal link of the linked rack that triggers automatic retraction of the firing mechanism.

[0044] FIG. 37 is a right aft perspective view of the partially disassembled surgical stapling and severing instrument of FIG. 35 with the side pawl firing mechanism disengaged and the distal link approaching automatic retraction.

[0045] FIG. 38 is left side view in elevation of the partially disassembled surgical stapling and severing instrument of FIG. 35 in an initial state of end effector open and anti-backup mechanism engaged.

[0046] FIG. 39 is a left side detail view of the right half shell and a first alternative anti-backup release lever (i.e., link triggered) of the handle portion of FIG. 38.

[0047] FIG. 40 is a left side detail view in elevation of the disassembled surgical stapling and severing instrument of FIG. 31 with the closure trigger clamped, the

firing trigger performing a final stroke and the distal link positioned to trip automatic retraction.

[0048] FIG. 41 is a left side detail in elevation of the disassembled surgical stapling and severing instrument of FIG. 40 immediately after the distal link has actuated and locked forward the anti-backup release lever, allowing the linked rack to retract.

[0049] FIG. 42 is a right disassembled perspective view of the idler and aft gears and manual retraction lever and ratcheting pawl of a manual retraction mechanism of the alternative (spring-biased side pawl) surgical stapling and severing instrument of FIG. 31.

[0050] FIG. 43 is a right perspective view of the manual retraction mechanism of FIG. 42 with the manual retraction lever partially cut away to expose a smaller diameter ratchet gear on the aft gear engaging the ratcheting pawl.

[0051] FIG. 44 is a partially disassembled left side view in elevation of an alternative surgical stapling and severing instrument (spring-biased side pawl) of FIG. 31 with the anti-backup mechanism engaged to fully fired linked rack that is disconnected from a combination tension/compression spring prior to actuation of the manual retraction lever of FIG. 42.

[0052] FIG. 45 is a partially disassembled left side view in elevation of the alternative surgical stapling and severing instrument of FIG. 44 with hidden portions of the anti-backup release lever, aft gear, and manual firing release lever shown in phantom.

[0053] FIG. 46 is a partially disassembled left side view in elevation of the alternative surgical stapling and severing instrument of FIG. 45 after actuation of the manual firing release lever has manually retracted the link rack.

[0054] FIG. 47 is a partially disassembled left side view in elevation of the alternative surgical stapling and severing instrument of FIG. 46 with the linked rack omitted depicting the manual firing release lever disengaging the anti-backup mechanism.

[0055] FIG. 48 is a left side detail view of a second alternative anti-backup release lever (gear forward cammed) and handle housing for the surgical stapling and severing instrument (spring-biased side pawl) of FIG. 31.

[0056] FIG. 49 is a left perspective disassembled view of the second alternative anti-backup release lever (gear forward cammed), aft gear axle, and automatic retraction cam wheel of FIG. 48.

[0057] FIG. 50 is a right side view in elevation of the second alternative anti-backup release mechanism of FIG. 48 with the linked rack in a retracted position and the anti-backup release lever proximally positioned with the anti-backup plate engaged to the firing rod.

[0058] FIG. 50A is a right detail side view in elevation of the aft gear, automatic retraction cam wheel and distal-most link of FIG. 50.

[0059] FIG. 51 is a right side view in elevation of the second alternative anti-backup release mechanism of FIG. 50 after a first firing stroke.

[0060] FIG. 51A is a right detail side view in elevation of the aft gear, automatic retraction cam wheel and a second link of FIG. 51.

[0061] FIG. 52 is a right side view in elevation of the second alternative anti-backup release mechanism of FIG. 51 after a second firing stroke.

[0062] FIG. 52A is a right detail side view in elevation of the aft gear, automatic retraction cam wheel and third link of FIG. 52.

[0063] FIG. 53 is a right detail side view in elevation of the second alternative anti-backup release mechanism of FIG. 52 after a third firing and final stroke.

[0064] FIG. 53A is a right detail side view in elevation of the aft gear, automatic retraction cam wheel and proximal-most fourth link of FIG. 53.

[0065] FIG. 54 is a right side view in elevation of the second alternative automatic release mechanism of FIG. 53 after a further firing stroke causes the automatic retraction cam wheel to distally slide and lock the second alternative anti-backup release lever, disengaging the anti-backup mechanism.

Detailed Description of the Invention

[0066] A surgical stapling and severing instrument, whether with a conventional solid or linked rack as advantageously depicted for a shorter handle, incorporates a multiple

firing stroke capability allowing greater firing travel without an excessive amount of force required to squeeze a firing trigger. Between firing strokes, an anti-backup mechanism is incorporated so that a firing retraction bias does inadvertently cause firing retraction.

[0067] In FIGS. 1-30, a first version of the surgical stapling and severing instrument incorporates a side moving anti-backup release mechanism that causes automatic retraction at the end of firing travel. This version also includes a first version of a manual retraction assistance capability to overcome binding. In FIGS. 31-54, a second version of a surgical stapling and severing instrument mechanism includes two more anti-backup release mechanisms for automatic retraction at the end of firing travel. Further, the first version of the surgical stapling and severing instrument of FIGS. 1-30 couples the firing motion from a firing trigger to a linked rack transmission by means of a frictionally biased top pawl. The second version of the surgical stapling and severing instrument of FIGS. 31-54 couples the firing motion of a firing trigger to a linked rack transmission by means of a spring biased side pawl. Furthermore, the second version of the surgical stapling and severing instrument in FIGS. 32-41 depicts a rack triggered automatic retraction capability with a ratcheting manual retraction mechanism as an alternative to the kick-out anti-backup release lever of FIGS. 1-30. In FIGS. 42-47, a ratcheting manual retraction mechanism is depicted in more detail, corresponding to what is generally depicted in FIGS. 32-41. FIGS. 48-54 depict a gear-driven automatic retraction feature built into the indication and ratcheting manual retraction mechanism as a further alternative to the kick-out anti-backup release lever of FIGS. 1-30 and the rack triggered anti-backup release lever of FIGS 31-47.

[0068] Turning to the Drawings, wherein like numerals denote like components throughout the several views, FIGS. 1 and 2 depict a surgical stapling and severing instrument 10 that is capable of practicing the unique benefits of the present invention. The surgical stapling and severing instrument 10 incorporates an end effector 12 having an anvil 14 pivotally attached to an elongate channel 16, forming opposing jaws for clamping tissue to be severed and stapled. The end effector 12 is coupled by a shaft 18 to a handle 20 (FIG. 1). An implement portion 22, formed by the end effector 12 and shaft 18, is advantageously sized for insertion through a trocar

or small laparoscopic opening to perform an endoscopic surgical procedure while being controlled by a surgeon grasping the handle 20. The handle 20 advantageously includes features that allow separate closure motion and firing motion, lockouts to prevent inadvertent or ill-advised firing of the end effector, as well as enabling multiple firing strokes to effect firing (i.e., severing and stapling) of the end effector 12 while indicating the degree of firing to the surgeon.

[0069] To these ends, a closure tube 24 of the shaft 18 is coupled between a closure trigger 26 (FIG. 1) and the anvil 14 to cause closure of the end effector 12. Within the closure tube 24, a frame 28 is coupled between the elongate channel 16 and the handle 20 to longitudinally position and support the end effector 12. A rotation knob 30 is coupled with the frame 28, and both elements are rotatably coupled to the handle 20 with respect to a rotational movement about a longitudinal axis of the shaft 18. Thus, the surgeon can rotate the end effector 12 by turning the rotation knob 30. The closure tube 24 is also rotated by the rotation knob 30 but retains a degree of longitudinal movement relative thereto to cause the closure of the end effector 12. Within the frame 28, a firing rod 32 is positioned for longitudinal movement and coupled between the anvil 14 of the end effector 12 and a multiple-stroke firing trigger 34. The closure trigger 26 is distal to a pistol grip 36 of the handle 20 with the firing trigger 34 distal to both the pistol grip 36 and closure trigger 26.

[0070] In endoscopic operation, once the implement portion 22 is inserted into a patient to access a surgical site, a surgeon refers to an endoscopic or other diagnostic imaging device to position tissue between the anvil 14 and elongate channel 16. Grasping the closure trigger 26 and pistol grip 36, the surgeon may repeatedly grasp and position the tissue. Once satisfied as to the location of the tissue relative to the end effector 12 and the amount of tissue therein, the surgeon depresses the closure trigger 26 fully toward the pistol grip 36, clamping the tissue in the end effector 12 and locking the closure trigger 26 in this clamped (closed) position. If not satisfied with this position, the surgeon may release the closure trigger 26 by depressing a closure release button 38 and thereafter repeat the procedure to clamp tissue.

[0071] If the clamping is correct, the surgeon may proceed with firing the surgical stapling and severing instrument 10. Specifically, the surgeon grasps the firing trigger

34 and pistol grip 36, depressing the firing trigger 34 a predetermined number of times. The number of firing strokes necessary is ergonomically determined based on a maximum hand size, maximum amount of force to be imparted to the instrument during each firing stroke, and the longitudinal distance and force needed to be transferred through the firing rod 32 to the end effector 12 during firing. As will be appreciated in the discussion below, individual surgeons may choose to cycle the firing trigger 34 a different angular range of motion, and thus increase or decrease the number of firing strokes, yet the handle 20 still effects firing without binding.

[0072] During these strokes, the surgeon may reference an indicator, depicted as an indicating retraction knob 40, that positionally rotates in response to the multiple firing strokes. Additionally, the position of the retraction knob 40 may confirm that full firing has occurred when encountering resistance to further cycling of the firing trigger 34. It should be appreciated that various indicia and instructions may be added to the handle 20 to enhance the indication provided by the rotation of the indicating retraction knob 40. Upon full travel of the firing rod 32 and when the firing trigger 34 is released, the handle 20 automatically retracts the firing rod 32. Alternatively, the surgeon, with knowledge that the surgical stapling and severing instrument 10 has not fully fired as depicted by the indicating retraction knob 40, may depress an anti-backup release button 42 and release the firing trigger 34. Both of these actions allow the handle 20 to automatically retract the firing rod 32.

[0073] It will be appreciated that the terms “proximal” and “distal” are used herein with reference to a clinician gripping a handle of an instrument. Thus, the end effector 12 is distal with respect to the more proximal handle 20. Analogous terms such as “front” and “back” similarly correspond respectively to distal and proximal. It will be further appreciated that for convenience and clarity, spatial terms such as “vertical” and “horizontal” are used herein with respect to the drawings. However, surgical instruments are used in many orientations and positions, and these terms are not intended to be limiting and absolute.

[0074] The present invention is being discussed in terms of endoscopic procedures and apparatus. However, use herein of terms such as “endoscopic”, should not be construed to limit the present invention to a surgical stapling and severing instrument

for use only in conjunction with an endoscopic tube (i.e., trocar). On the contrary, it is believed that the present invention may find use in any procedure where access is limited to a small incision, including but not limited to laparoscopic procedures, as well as open procedures.

E-Beam End Effector.

[0075] The advantages of a handle 20, which is capable of providing multiple-stroke firing motion, has application to a number of instruments, with one such end effector 12 being depicted in FIGS. 2-6. With particular reference to FIG. 4, the end effector 12 responds to the closure motion from the handle 20 (not depicted in FIGS. 2-6) first by including an anvil face 50 (FIGS. 2, 4, 6) connecting to an anvil proximal end 52 that includes a pair of laterally projecting anvil pivot pins 54 that are proximal to a vertically projecting anvil feature 56 (FIG. 4). The anvil pivot pins 54 translate within kidney shaped openings 58 in the elongate channel 16 to open and close anvil 14 relative to elongate channel 16. The anvil feature 56 engages a bent tab 59 (FIGS. 2, 4, 6) extending inwardly in tab aperture 60 on a distal end 62 of the closure tube 24, the latter distally terminating in a distal edge 64 that pushes against the anvil face 50. Thus, when the closure tube 24 moves proximally from its open position, the bent tab 59 of the closure tube 24 draws the anvil feature 56 proximally, and the anvil pivot pins 54 follow the kidney shaped openings 58 of the elongate channel 16 causing the anvil 14 to simultaneously translate proximally and rotate upward to the open position. When the closure tube 24 moves distally, the bent tab 59 in the tab aperture 60 releases from the anvil feature 56 and the distal edge 64 pushes on the anvil face 50, closing the anvil 14.

[0076] With continued reference to FIG. 4, the implement portion 22 also includes components that respond to the firing motion of the firing rod 32. In particular, the firing rod 32 rotatably engages a firing trough member 66 having a longitudinal recess 68. Firing trough member 66 moves longitudinally within frame 28 in direct response to longitudinal motion of firing rod 32. A longitudinal slot 70 in the closure tube 24 operably couples with the rotation knob 30 (not shown in FIGS. 2-6). The length of the longitudinal slot 70 in the closure tube 24 is sufficiently long to allow relative longitudinal motion with the rotation knob 30 to accomplish firing and closure

motions respectively with the coupling of the rotation knob 30 passing on through a longitudinal slot 72 in the frame 28 to slidingly engage the longitudinal recess 68 in the frame trough member 66.

[0077] The distal end of the frame trough member 66 is attached to a proximal end of a firing bar 76 that moves within the frame 28, specifically within a guide 78 therein, to distally project an E-beam 80 into the end effector 12. The end effector 12 includes a staple cartridge 82 that is actuated by the E-beam 80. The staple cartridge 82 has a tray 84 that holds a staple cartridge body 86, a wedge sled driver 88, staple drivers 90 and staples 92. It will be appreciated that the wedge sled driver 88 longitudinally moves within a firing recess 94 (FIG. 2) located between the cartridge tray 84 and the cartridge body 86. The wedge sled driver 88 presents camming surfaces that contact and lift the staple drivers 90 upward, driving the staples 92 up from staple apertures 96 (FIG. 3) into contact with staple forming grooves 98 (FIG. 3) of the anvil 14, creating formed "B"-shaped staples, such as depicted at 100 of FIG. 6. With particular reference to FIG. 3, the staple cartridge body 86 further includes a proximally open, vertical slot 102 for passage of the E-beam 80. Specifically, a cutting surface 104 is provided along a distal end of E-beam 80 to cut tissue after it is stapled.

[0078] In FIGS. 2, 5, 6, respectively, the end effector 12 is depicted in a sequence of open (i.e., start) condition, clamped and unfired condition, and fully fired condition. Features of the E-beam 80 that facilitate firing of the end effector 12, in particular, are depicted. In FIG. 2, the wedge sled driver 88 is in its fully proximal position, indicating an unfired staple cartridge 82. A middle pin 106 is aligned to enter the firing recess 94 in the staple cartridge 82, for distally driving the wedge sled driver 88. A bottom pin or cap 108 of the E-beam 80 slides along a bottom surface of the elongate channel 16, thus the middle and bottom pins 106, 108 slidingly engage the elongate channel 16. In the open and unfired state of FIG. 2, a top pin 110 of the E-beam 80 has entered and is residing within an anvil pocket 112 of the anvil 14, and thus does not impede repeated opening and closing of the anvil 14.

[0079] In FIG. 5, the end effector 12 is depicted as clamped and ready to fire. The top pin 110 of the E-beam 80 is aligned with an anvil slot 114 in the anvil 14 distal to and communicating with the anvil pocket 112. In FIG. 6, the E-beam 80 has been fully

fired, with the upper pin 110 translating down the anvil slot 114, affirmatively spacing the anvil 14 from the elongate channel 16 as the cutting surface 104 severs clamped tissue. Simultaneously, the middle pin 106 has actuated the staple cartridge 82 as previously described. Thereafter, the E-beam 80 is retracted prior to opening the end effector 12 and replacing the staple cartridge 82 for an additional operation.

[0080] The illustrative end effector 12 is described in greater detail in five co-pending and commonly-owned U.S. patent applications, the disclosure of each being hereby incorporated by reference in their entirety: (1) "SURGICAL STAPLING INSTRUMENT HAVING A SINGLE LOCKOUT MECHANISM FOR PREVENTION OF FIRING", Ser. No. 10/441,424, to Frederick E. Shelton IV, Michael Setser, Bruce Weisenburgh II, filed 20 June 2003; (2) "SURGICAL STAPLING INSTRUMENT HAVING SEPARATE DISTINCT CLOSING AND FIRING SYSTEMS", Ser. No. 10/441,632, to Frederick E. Shelton IV, Michael Setser, Brian J. Hemmelgarn II, filed 20 June 2003; (3) "SURGICAL STAPLING INSTRUMENT HAVING A SPENT CARTRIDGE LOCKOUT", Ser. No. 10/441,565, to Frederick E. Shelton IV, Micheal Setser, Bruce Weisenburgh II, filed 20 June 2003; (4) "SURGICAL STAPLING INSTRUMENT HAVING A FIRING LOCKOUT FOR AN UNCLOSED ANVIL", Ser. No. 10/441,580, to Frederick E. Shelton IV, Michael Setser, Bruce Weisenburgh II, filed 20 June 2003; and (5) "SURGICAL STAPLING INSTRUMENT INCORPORATING AN E-BEAM FIRING MECHANISM", Ser. No. 10/443,617, to Frederick E. Shelton IV, Michael Setser, Bruce Weisenburgh II, filed 20 June 2003.

[0081] It should be appreciated that although a nonarticulating shaft 18 is illustrated herein, applications of the present invention may include instruments capable of articulation, such as described in five co-pending and commonly owned U.S. patent applications, the disclosure of each being hereby incorporated by reference in their entirety: (1) "SURGICAL INSTRUMENT INCORPORATING AN ARTICULATION MECHANISM HAVING ROTATION ABOUT THE LONGITUDINAL AXIS", Ser. No. 10/615,973, to Frederick E. Shelton IV, Brian J. Hemmelgarn, Jeffrey S. Swayze, Kenneth S. Wales, filed 9 July 2003; (2) "SURGICAL STAPLING INSTRUMENT INCORPORATING AN ARTICULATION JOINT FOR A FIRING BAR TRACK", Ser. No. 10/615,962, to

Brian J. Hemmelgarn, filed 9 July 2003; (3) "A SURGICAL INSTRUMENT WITH A LATERAL-MOVING ARTICULATION CONTROL", Ser. No. 10/615972, to Jeffrey S. Swayze, filed 9 July 2003; (4) "SURGICAL STAPLING INSTRUMENT INCORPORATING A TAPERED FIRING BAR FOR INCREASED FLEXIBILITY AROUND THE ARTICULATION JOINT", Ser. No. 10/615,974, to Frederick E. Shelton IV, Michael Setser, Bruce Weisenburgh II, filed 9 July 2003; and (5) "SURGICAL STAPLING INSTRUMENT HAVING ARTICULATION JOINT SUPPORT PLATES FOR SUPPORTING A FIRING BAR", Ser. No. 10/615,971, to Jeffrey S. Swayze, Joseph Charles Hueil, filed 9 July 2003.

Multi-Stroke Firing Handle.

[0082] In FIGS. 7-8, the handle 20 of the surgical stapling and severing instrument 10 is shown in greater detail, illustrating a linked transmission firing mechanism 150 that provides features such as increased strength, reduced handle size, minimized binding, etc.

[0083] Closure of the end effector 12 (not shown in FIGS. 7-8) is caused by depressing the closure trigger 26 toward the pistol grip 36 of handle 20. The closure trigger 26 pivots about a closure trigger pin 152 that is coupled to a handle housing 154 composed of right and left half shells 156, 158 (latter at FIGS. 15-18), causing an upper portion 160 of the closure trigger 26 to move forward. The closure tube 24 receives this closure movement via a closure yoke 162 that is pinned to a closure link 164 and to the upper portion 160 of the closure trigger 26 respectively by a closure yoke pin 166 and a closure link pin 168.

[0084] In the fully open position of FIG. 7, the upper portion 160 of the closure trigger 26 contacts and holds a locking arm 172 of the pivoting closure release button 38 in the position shown. When the closure trigger 26 reaches its fully depressed position, the closure trigger 26 releases the locking arm 172 and an abutting surface 170 rotates into engagement with a distal rightward notch 171 of the pivoting locking arm 172, holding the closure trigger 26 in this clamped or closed position. A proximal end of the locking arm 172 pivots about a lateral pivotal connection 174 with the handle housing 154 to expose the closure release button 38. An intermediate, distal side 178 of the closure release button 38 is urged proximally by a compression spring

180, which is compressed between a housing structure 182 and closure release button 38. The result is that the closure release button 38 urges the locking arm 172 counterclockwise (when viewed from the left) into locking contact with the abutting surface 170 of closure trigger 26, which prevents unclamping of closure trigger 26 when the linked transmission firing system 150 is in an unretracted condition, as described in greater detail below.

[0085] With the closure trigger 26 retracted and fully depressed, the firing trigger 34 is unlocked and may be depressed toward the pistol grip 36 multiple times to effect firing of the end effector 12. As depicted, the linked transmission firing mechanism 150 is initially retracted, urged to remain in this position by a combination tension/compression spring 184 that is constrained within the pistol grip 36 of the handle 20, with its nonmoving end 186 connected to the handle housing 154 and a moving end 188 connected to a downwardly flexed and proximal, retracted end 190 of a steel band 192.

[0086] A distally-disposed end 194 of the steel band 192 is attached to a link coupling 195 for structural loading, which in turn is attached to a front link 196a of a plurality of links 196a-196d that form a linked rack 200. Linked rack 200 is flexible yet has distal links that form a straight rigid rack assembly that may transfer a significant firing force through the firing rod 32 in the implement portion 22, yet readily retract into the pistol grip 36 to minimize the longitudinal length of the handle 20.

[0087] It should be appreciated that the combination tension/compression spring 184 increases the amount of firing travel available while essentially reducing the minimum length by half over a single spring.

[0088] The firing trigger 34 pivots about a firing trigger pin 202 that is connected to the handle housing 154. An upper portion 204 of the firing trigger 34 moves distally about the firing trigger pin 202 as the firing trigger 34 is depressed towards pistol grip 36, stretching a proximally placed firing trigger tension spring 206 proximally connected between the upper portion 204 of the firing trigger 34 and the handle housing 154. The upper portion 204 of the firing trigger 34 engages the linked rack 200 during each firing trigger depression by a traction biasing mechanism 210 that also disengages when the firing trigger 34 is released. Firing trigger tension spring

206 urges the firing trigger 34 distally when released and disengages the traction biasing mechanism 210.

[0089] As the linked transmission firing mechanism 150 actuates, an idler gear 220 is rotated clockwise (as viewed from the left side) by engagement with a toothed upper surface 222 of the linked rack 200. This rotation is coupled to an indicator gear 230, which thus rotates counterclockwise in response to the idler gear 220. Both the idler gear 220 and indicator gear 230 are rotatably connected to the handle housing 154. The gear relationship between the linked rack 200, idler gear 220 and indicator gear 230 may be advantageously selected so that the toothed upper surface 222 has tooth dimensions that are suitably strong and that the indicator gear 230 makes no more than one revolution during the full firing travel of the linked transmission firing mechanism 150.

[0090] As described in greater detail below, the indicator gear 230 performs at least four functions. First, when the linked rack 200 is fully retracted and both triggers 26, 34 are open as shown in FIG. 7, an opening 240 in a circular ridge 242 on the left side of the indicator gear 230 is presented to an upper surface 244 of the locking arm 172. Locking arm 172 is biased into the opening 240 by contact with the closure trigger 26, which in turn is urged to the open position by a closure tension spring 246. Closure trigger tension spring 246 is connected proximally to the upper portion 160 of the closure trigger 26 and the handle housing 154, and thus has energy stored during closing of the closure trigger 26 that urges the closure trigger 26 distally to its unclosed position.

[0091] A second function of the indicator gear 230 is that it is connected to the indicating retraction knob 40 externally disposed on the handle 20. Thus, the indicator gear 230 communicates the relative position of the firing mechanism 150 to the indicating retraction knob 40 so that the surgeon has a visual indication of how many strokes of the firing trigger 34 are required to complete firing.

[0092] A third function of the indicator gear 230 is to longitudinally and angularly move an anti-backup release lever 248 of an anti-backup mechanism (one-way clutch mechanism) 250 as the surgical stapling and severing instrument 10 is operated. During the firing strokes, proximal movement of anti-backup release lever 248 by

indicator gear 230 activates the anti-backup mechanism 250 (FIGS. 15-16) that allows distal movement of firing bar 32 and prevents proximal motion of firing bar 32. This movement also extends the anti-backup release button 42 from the proximal end of the handle housing 154 for the operator to actuate should the need arise for the linked transmission firing mechanism 150 to be retracted during the firing strokes. After completion of the firing strokes, the indicator gear 230 reverses direction of rotation as the firing mechanism 150 retracts. The reversed rotation deactivates the anti-backup mechanism 250, withdraws the anti-backup release button 42 into the handle 20, and rotates the anti-backup release lever 248 laterally to the right (FIG. 19) to allow continued reverse rotation of the indicator gear 230.

[0093] A fourth function of the indicator gear 230 is to receive a manual rotation from the indicating retraction knob 40 (clockwise in the depiction of FIG. 7) to retract the firing mechanism 150 with anti-backup mechanism 250 unlocked, thereby overcoming any binding in the firing mechanism 150 that is not readily overcome by the combination tension/compression spring 184. This manual retraction assistance may be employed after a partial firing of the firing mechanism 150 that would otherwise be prevented by the anti-backup mechanism 250 that withdraws the anti-backup release button 42 so that the latter may not laterally move the anti-backup release lever 248.

[0094] Continuing with FIGS. 7-8, anti-backup mechanism 250 consists of the operator accessible anti-backup release lever 248 operably coupled at the proximal end to the anti-backup release button 42 and at the distal end to an anti-backup yoke 256. In particular, a distal end 254 of the anti-backup release lever 248 is engaged to the anti-backup yoke 256 by an anti-backup yoke pin 258. The anti-backup yoke 256 moves longitudinally to impart a rotation to an anti-backup cam slot tube 252 that is longitudinally constrained by the handle housing 154 and that encompasses the firing rod 32 distally to the connection of the firing rod 32 to the link coupling 195 of the linked rack 200. The anti-backup yoke 256 communicates the longitudinal movement from the anti-backup release lever 248 via a cam slot tube pin 260 to the anti-backup cam slot tube 252. That is, longitudinal movement of cam slot tube pin 260 in an angled slot in the anti-backup cam slot tube 252 rotates the anti-backup cam slot tube 252.

[0095] Trapped between a proximal end of the frame 28 and the anti-backup cam slot tube 252 respectively are an anti-backup compression spring 264, an anti-backup plate 266, and an anti-backup cam tube 268. As depicted, proximal movement of the firing rod 32 causes the anti-backup plate 266 to pivot top to the rear, presenting an increased frictional contact to the firing rod 32 that resists further proximal movement of the firing rod 32.

[0096] This anti-backup plate 266 pivots in a manner similar to that of a screen door lock that holds open a screen door when the anti-backup cam slot tube 252 is closely spaced to the anti-backup cam tube 268. Specifically, the anti-backup compression spring 264 is able to act upon a top surface of the plate 266 to tip the anti-backup plate 266 to its locked position. Rotation of the anti-backup cam slot tube 252 causes a distal camming movement of the anti-backup cam tube 268 thereby forcing the top of the anti-backup plate 266 distally, overcoming the force from the anti-backup compression spring 264, thus positioning the anti-backup plate 266 in an untipped (perpendicular), unlocked position that allows proximal retraction of the firing rod 32.

[0097] With particular reference to FIGS. 8-10, the traction biasing mechanism 210 is depicted as being composed of a pawl 270 that has a distally projecting narrow tip 272 and a rightwardly projecting lateral pin 274 (FIG. 8) at its proximal end that is rotatably inserted through a hole 276 in the upper portion 204 of the firing trigger 34. On the right side of the firing trigger 34, the lateral pin 274 receives a biasing member, depicted as biasing wheel 278. As the firing trigger 34 translates fore and aft, the biasing wheel 278 traverses an arc proximate to the right half shell 156 of the handle housing 154, overrunning at its distal portion of travel a biasing ramp 280 integrally formed in the right half shell 156. The biasing wheel 278 may advantageously be formed from a resilient, frictional material that induces a counterclockwise rotation (when viewed from the left) into the lateral pin 274 of the pawl 270, thus traction biasing the distally projecting narrow tip 272 downward into a ramped central track 282 of the nearest link 196a-d to engage the linked rack 200. As the firing trigger 34 is released, the biasing wheel 278 thus tractionally biases the pawl 270 in the opposite direction, raising the narrow tip 272 from the ramped central track 282 of the linked rack 200. To ensure disengagement of the tip 272 under high load conditions and at nearly full distal travel of the pawl 270, the right side of the

pawl 270 ramps up onto a proximally and upwardly facing beveled surface 284 (FIG. 8) on the rightside of the closure yoke 162 to disengage the narrow tip 272 from the ramped central track 282. If the firing trigger 34 is released at any point other than full travel, the biasing wheel 278 is used to lift the narrow tip 272 from the ramped central track 282. Whereas a biasing wheel 278 is depicted, it should be appreciated that the shape of the biasing member or wheel 278 is illustrative and may be varied to accommodate a variety of shapes that use friction or traction to engage or disengage the firing of the end effector.

Linked Rack.

[0098] With particular reference to FIG. 10, the linked rack 200 is depicted in greater detail to illustrate a number of advantages. Each link 196a-d is pinned to adjacent links 196a-d for downward, proximal rotation into the pistol grip 36. Although bendable in this direction, the linked rack 200 forms a rigid configuration when against a columnar loading, especially a loading that would otherwise urge the distal links 196a-d to bend upwardly. In particular, each link 196a-d proximally terminates in a male extension 300 having lateral through hole 302 on a lower portion thereof. A left side 304 of each link 196a-d includes the toothed upper surface 222 and a right side 306 parallels the left side 304 defining between them the ramped central track 282 that terminates in the male extension 300.

[0099] The proximal portion of the central track 282 terminates before the right and left sides 304, 306, forming a clevice 308 for receiving the male extension 300 from a leading link 196a-d, which is hingedly attached by a pivot pin 310. Each leading link 196a-d has a flat surface 312 at the proximal end that is generally perpendicular to the direction of columnar loading from the firing rod 32. Each trailing link 196a-d has a contact surface 314 at the distal end that is also generally perpendicular to the direction of columnar loading. The lateral through hole 302 is spaced away sufficient so that a notch 316 is formed between lower portions of adjacent flat surface 312 and contact surface 314 to provide clearance for downward pivoting of the trailing link 196a-d relative to the leading link 196a-d. Yet, the upper portions of the adjacent flat surface 312 and contact surface 314 are registered for abutment as the leading and trailing links 196a-d are longitudinally aligned, thereby resisting further upward

deflection. As shown, when adjacent links 196a-d are horizontal, the holes 302 and pins 310 are located below the line of action of the firing rod 32. When loads are applied to the firing trigger 34, the traction biasing mechanism 210 applies a pushing load along the line of action and biases consecutive horizontal links 196a-d together. Thus, imparting a line of action of a firing force above the pivot pins 310 maintains any leading links 196a-d in a rigid, straight configuration. The ramped central track 282 of a trailing link 196b-d directs the distally projecting narrow tip 272 of the pawl 270 into engagement with the male extension 300 of the leading link 196a-c.

[00100] The front link 196a is distally attached to the link coupling 195 that includes features that couple to the proximal end of the firing rod 32 as well as including a male extension 300 and flat surface 312 similar to the links 196a-d, with sufficient spacing to receive there between tabs 320, 322 (FIG. 8) of the distally-disposed end 194 of the steel band 192, wherein the tabs 320, 322 attached by the same pivot pin 310 that attaches the front link 196a to the link coupling 195. Application of the retraction force at this force advantageously reduces frictional forces by applying the force along the longitudinal axis of the firing rod 32 and the straight portion of the linked rack 200.

[00101] Having a toothed upper surface 222 on the left side 304 that is distinct from the ramped central track 282 advantageously allows a nonbinding, strong engagement between the pawl 270 and the linked rack 200, even if the firing trigger 34 has been stroked with varying ranges of motion. Meanwhile the toothed upper surface 222 provides a continuous engagement with the idler gear 220 for the advantages described above.

[00102] It should be appreciated that although a pinned clevis connection between links 196a-d has been advantageously depicted, a resilient or flexible connection may be used. In addition, four links 196a-d are depicted, but various numbers and lengths of links may be selected depending on firing travel, radius of curvature, etc.

Traction-Biasing Mechanism.

[00103] In FIGS. 11-14, the linked transmission firing mechanism 150 is depicted in a sequence that illustrates how the traction biasing mechanism 210 (i.e., pawl 270,

biasing wheel 278, and biasing ramp 280) affirmatively respond to the direction of travel of the firing trigger 34. Moreover, since the biasing wheel 278 makes a frictional contact with the biasing ramp 280, the biasing wheel 278 slides when full disengagement or engagement movement of the pawl 270 is achieved.

[00104] In FIG. 11, the firing trigger 34 has been partially depressed to where the traction biasing mechanism 210 begins to initiate engagement of the firing trigger 34 movement to the linked rack 200. In particular, the biasing wheel 278 has contacted the proximal end of the biasing ramp 280, and thus begins to rotate counterclockwise, as viewed from the left, imparting this rotation to the pawl 270, which is initially disengaged from the linked rack 200. In FIG. 12, the firing mechanism 150 has advanced a distance sufficient for the pawl 270 to have fully rotated into engagement with the ramped central track 282 of the first link 196a, abutting the link coupling 195 and thereby transferring a firing motion into the firing rod 32. In FIG. 13, the firing trigger 34 and overall firing mechanism 150 has continued to a nearly full travel position, during which movement the biasing wheel 278 has slid along the biasing ramp 280. At the end of the firing stroke, the right lower edge of the pawl 270 (FIG. 8) contacts the proximally and upwardly facing beveled surface 284 of the closure yoke 162 and lifts the pawl 270 from engagement with the link 196a-d, allowing the linked rack 200 to retract.

[00105] In FIG. 14, the firing trigger 34 has been released sufficient for the biasing wheel 278 to gain traction proximally on the biasing ramp 280, causing a clockwise rotation, when viewed from the left, and raising the pawl 270. Given the proximally directed slope of the ramped central track 282 of the linked rack 200, the firing mechanism 150 is not obstructed in being moved proximally in preparation for either another firing stroke or for a retraction cycle.

[00106] It should be appreciated that the traction biasing mechanism 210 may be implemented in an instrument that performs at least a single stroke.

Anti-Backup Mechanism.

[00107] As described above, the anti-backup mechanism 250 locks during the firing strokes to prevent the firing rod 32, and thus the firing mechanism 150, from

retracting until full firing travel is achieved or the user selects to retract. In FIG. 15, the anti-backup mechanism 250 is depicted in a locked condition. The anti-backup release lever 248 is in the proximal-most position and has rotated anti-backup cam slot tube 252 to engage the anti-backup cam tube 268 to form a minimum longitudinal length, creating an increased space for the anti-backup plate 266. Anti-backup plate 266 is tipped back at the angle shown by the anti-backup compression spring 264 and grips the firing rod 32, as shown in FIG. 16.

[00108] In FIG. 16, a proximal end 400 of the frame 28 include a half spool portion 402 that receives the anti-backup compression spring 264 against its distal annular ring 404. Proximal to the spring 264, the frame 28 has a top and proximally open trough 406 that communicates with the interior of the frame 28. The anti-backup plate 266 is a generally flat plate shaped to fit into the open trough 406 adjacent to the spring 264. Through hole 408 extends through plate 266. In particular, the top portion of the anti-backup plate 266 that is exposed from the open trough 406 projects upwardly to receive a force from the spring 264. The lower portion of the anti-backup plate 266 is longitudinally constrained and not in contact with the spring 264. Thus, unless restrained by the anti-backup cam tube 268, the top of the anti-backup plate 266 is urged to tip proximally, causing the through hole 408 in the anti-backup plate 266 to bind against the firing rod 32.

[00109] In FIG. 17, the anti-backup mechanism 250 is depicted as unlocked. The anti-lock release lever 248 has laterally moved to the right, imparting a movement to the right of the anti-backup yoke 256, thereby imparting a clockwise rotation of the anti-backup cam slot tube 252, when viewed from a proximal position. A camming surface 410 of the anti-backup cam slot tube 252 departs from a proximal cutout 412 in the anti-backup cam tube 268, forcing the latter to move distally against the anti-backup plate 266, which in turn moves to a perpendicular, unlocked position and further compresses anti-backup compression spring 264.

[00110] In FIG. 18, the interaction between the anti-backup release lever 248 and the right side of the indicator gear 230 are depicted after the firing trigger 34 has been fired twice. A lever opening 420 extends through anti-backup release lever 248 to receive and interact with a curved ramp 430 extending outwardly from the right side

of the indicator gear 230. Rotation of the indicator gear 230 drives the anti-backup release lever 248 distally, which bottoms out the anti-backup release button 42 into a button receptacle 422 and disengages the anti-backup mechanism 250, and drives it proximally, which exposes the anti-backup release button 42 as depicted, as well as kicking the anti-backup release lever 248 to the right to actuate the anti-backup mechanism 250 (FIG. 19). The anti-backup yoke 256 allows this motion with a longitudinal slotted connection with the anti-backup yoke pin 258 (not shown). These movements of the anti-backup release lever 248 are caused by the curved ramp 430 that surrounds almost a quarter of the circumference of an indicator pin 432, about which the indicator gear 230 turns. The clockwise most portion (when viewed from the right), or peak 434, of the curved ramp 430 projects the farthest to the right away from the surface of the indicator gear 230. The counterclockwise most portion or entry 436 of the curved ramp 430 is thus flush with the surface of the indicator gear 230.

[00111] In FIGS. 20-25, the lever opening 420 is shaped with a horizontal slot 440 that defines the proximal and distal movement available to the anti-backup release lever 248, with the indicator pin 432 residing within this horizontal slot 440. A top recess 442 and a bottom recess 444 vertically widen and communicate with the horizontal slot 440 and define at what angular position the clockwise most portion 434 of the curved ramp 430 longitudinally translates the anti-backup release lever 248. The top and bottom recesses 442, 444 are sized to allow the curved ramp 430 to enter the respective recess 442, 444 without tipping the anti-backup release lever 248 until the end of normal firing. The lever opening 420 is above the longitudinal axis of the anti-backup mechanism 250, and thus a rightward force creates a rotating force of the anti-backup cam slot tube 252.

[00112] In FIG. 20, the anti-backup release lever 248 and indicator gear 230 are shown in their initial condition and they remain so throughout the time in which the closure trigger 26 is being actuated. In particular, the anti-backup release lever 248 is distally positioned, bottoming out the anti-backup release button 42 in its button receptacle 422. The curved ramp 430 is at its counterclockwise extreme (when viewed from the right), with its peak 434 at approximately the 6 o'clock position adjacent distally to a

proximal vertical surface of the lower recess 444 of the lever recess 420 with the entry 436 of the curved ramp 430 at about 3 o'clock.

[00113] In FIG. 21, the first firing stroke of the firing trigger 34 (not shown in FIGS. 20-25) has occurred, wherein the peak 434 has acted against the proximal vertical surface of the bottom recess 444 and the curved ramp 430 has rotated clockwise to about the 9 o'clock position. Thereby, the anti-backup release lever 248 has translated proximally to expose the anti-backup release button 42 from the button receptacle 422 and actuated the anti-backup mechanism 250. The relationship of the rate of clockwise rotation of the indicator gear 230 to the desired number of full firing strokes is selected so that the curved ramp 430 continues unimpeded as subsequent firing strokes are made, as depicted in FIG. 22 wherein the two firing strokes have been completed, moving the peak to approximately the twelve o'clock position. Thus, the peak 434 is proximal to and adjacent to the distal vertical edge of the upper recess 442, positioned so that a subsequent firing stroke will act upon the anti-backup release lever 248 to cause distal horizontal movement. Note that during these firing strokes the curved ramp 430 resides proximal to the indicator pin 432. Depressing the release button 42 would cause the proximal edge of the lever opening 420 to ride up onto the curved ramp 430, tilting the anti-backup release lever 248 as depicted in FIG. 19.

[00114] In FIG. 23, the final firing stroke is concluding, during which the peak 434 has moved to approximately 3 o'clock while moving the proximal end of the horizontal slot 440 up against the indicator pin 432, bottoming out the anti-backup release button 42, releasing the anti-backup mechanism 250 and thereby initiating the retraction of linked transmission firing mechanism 150.

[00115] In FIG. 24, the unlocked anti-backup mechanism 250 has allowed the spring-powered retraction of the linked rack 200 to occur, which in turn causes a counterclockwise rotation, when viewed from the right, of the indicator gear 230. As the firing mechanism 150 begins to retract, the counterclockwise rotation of indicator gear 230 slides the angled surface of curved ramp 430 into ramped contact with the proximal edge of the top recess 442. Continued rotation of indicator gear 230 drives the curved ramp 430 under the upper portion of backup release lever 248 and tilts or deflects lever 248 to the position shown in FIG. 19. The tilting motion of the backup

release lever 248 is provided to prevent longitudinal motion of lever 248 by the curved ramp 430 during retraction of the linked rack 200. Should the linked rack 200 not retract at the end of the last stroke after anti-backup mechanism 250 is automatically unlocked at the end of the firing sequence, turning the indicator knob 40 (not shown in FIGS. 20-25) that is attached to indicator pin 432 would provide extra force to retract the linked rack 200. It should further be appreciated that during partial firing of the firing mechanism 150, such as depicted in FIG. 22, depressing the release button 42 would also retract the linked rack 200 by moving the anti-backup release lever 248 distally to unlock the anti-backup mechanism 250. The retraction motion continues until the indicator gear 230 is returned to its initial position, as depicted in FIG. 25.

[00116] It should be appreciated that the shape of the lever opening 420 and arcuate size of the arced ramp 430 are illustrative and may be varied to accommodate a handle configured for a different number of firing strokes.

[00117] It should be appreciated that the rotary release mechanism formed by the interaction of the indicator gear 230 and the lever opening 420 may be replaced with other linkages.

Opening Lockout.

[00118] In FIG. 26, the surgical stapling and severing instrument 10 is in its initial open condition with both closure and firing triggers 26, 34 forward and the linked rack 200 retracted. As described above, in this unfired condition, the indicator gear 230 presents its opening 240 in circular ridge 242 to the upper surface 244 of the locking arm 172, which is ordinarily rotated downward out of the opening 240 by the action of the compression spring 180 between the housing structure 182 and the intermediate distal side 178 of the closure release button 38. In FIG. 26, the closure release button 38 has been depressed, causing the upper surface 244 to enter the opening 240. In FIG. 27, the closure trigger 26 and the locking arm 172 are in clamping abutment after depressing the closure trigger 26 against the pistol grip 36 and the firing trigger 34 is swung into position for firing. The closure release button 38 is not depressed, as noted by the expanded closure spring 180. The upper surface 244 of the locking arm 172 is swung below circular ridge 242 and indicator gear 230

is unlocked and free to rotate counterclockwise. The downward movement of locking arm 172 unlocks the indicator gear 230 and thus the linked transmission firing mechanism 150 and allows the firing trigger 34 to be actuated. Thus, as the indicator gear 230 continues to rotate with further firing, the closure release button 38 is precluded from releasing the clamped closure trigger 26.

Position Indicator And Release Mechanism.

[00119] In FIG. 28, a surgical stapling and severing instrument 610 has the indicator retraction knob replaced by an alternate indicator device 640 upwardly extended to present a top-accessible retraction lever 642 that functions as a stuck firing retractor that may be readily actuated by either hand. The instrument 610 is shown opened and unfired, as indicated by the distally forward closure and firing triggers 26, 34 and the open end effector 12. When firing has not commenced, the retraction lever 642 is normally distally rotated adjacent to the handle housing 154. The indicator 640 may be coupled (not shown) to the previously described idler gear 220 and a firing mechanism 150, as described previously in which the retraction lever 642 would rotate proximally as the linked transmission 150 is fired, presenting a visual indication of firing as well as allowing a way of assisting automatic retraction by applying a manual distal force thereto as a rotary position indicator. The direction of rotation must be reversed so it must be attached to the idler gear 220 for this version.

[00120] In FIG 29, another alternate firing mechanism 650 incorporates the afore-described top-accessible retraction lever 642 and indicator device 640 that is coupled to an indicator gear 660 having first and second dwell areas 662, 664 within a toothed area 668. The first dwell area 662 is presented to the idler gear 220 when the retraction lever 642 is at its distal position adjacent to the handle housing 154. Thereby, the idler gear 220 is allowed free clockwise and counterclockwise rotation as driven by the longitudinally moving linked rack 200. Should the E-beam 80 (not shown in FIG. 29) become stuck within the end effector 12 for any reason and cannot be withdrawn proximally by the combination tension/compression spring 184 (not shown in FIG. 29), the retraction lever 642 may be pulled proximally by the surgeon to rotate the indicator gear 660 clockwise, as viewed from the left. This rotational movement of the retraction lever 660 rotates the indicator gear 660 and brings a

curved tooth segment 670 that is between the first and second dwell 662, 664 into contact with the teeth of the idler gear 220 to operably couple the retraction lever 642 to the firing mechanism 650.

[00121] Once coupled, the surgeon may apply extra force to the retraction lever 642 to retract the firing mechanism 650, thereby rotating the idler gear 220 counterclockwise and longitudinally moving the linked rack 200 proximally to retract the E-beam 80. As the retraction lever 642 is further rotated to the position of FIG 30, the idler gear 220 disengages with the curved tooth segment 670 and is decoupled from the retraction lever 642 by second dwell area 664. At this point, the application of force has freed the stuck firing mechanism 650 and the combination tension/compression springs 184 will fully retract the linked rack 200.

[00122] An alternate design (not shown) involves the addition of a one way slip clutch such as a Sprague clutch or an equivalent (not shown) between the retraction lever 642 and the indicator gear 660. In the previous design, the range of motion of the retraction lever 642 is limited by contact with the handle housing 154 at each end of the range or motion less than a full revolution. This limits the distance that the firing system 650 can be retracted for one movement of the retraction lever 642. The addition of the one way slip clutch between the retraction lever 642 and indicator gear 660 allows the retraction lever 642 to operably engage with the indicator gear 660 as the retraction lever 642 rotates back (distal to proximal) and disengages as the lever 642 moves forward (proximal to distal). This ensures full retraction of the firing mechanism 650 by allowing multiple pulls on the retraction lever 642. Second dwell area 664 may be removed from the indicator gear 660 to ensure more tooth-to-tooth engagement. Additionally, the incorporation of a clutch mechanism allows the retraction lever to be rotated adjacent to the handle 20 after use.

[00123] In use, the surgeon positions the end effector 12 and shaft 18 through the cannula or a trocar to a surgical site, and positions the anvil 14 and elongate channel 16 as opposing jaws to grasp tissue to be stapled and severed. Once satisfied with the position of end effector 12, the closure trigger 26 is fully depressed toward the pistol grip 36 of the handle 20, causing the upper portion 160 of the closure trigger 26 to lock against the locking arm 172 that is pivotally attached to the closure release button

38. Then, the firing trigger 34 is depressed and released a predetermined number of times to effect full firing travel to drive a firing rod 32 down the shaft 18 to the E-beam 80 in the end effector 12. During firing, the anti-backup mechanism 250 is in a locked condition, with the anti-backup plate 266 allowed to tip back, binding any proximal motion of the firing rod 32. The distal firing motion is imparted to the firing rod 32 by the linked transmission firing mechanism 150 that includes linked rack 200 proximally attached to the firing rod 32, with each link 196a-d pinned to adjacent links 196a-d such that bending is allowed down into the pistol grip 36 but not upward, forming a rigid structure when straight with a force imparted above the pivot pins 310 between links 196a-d. Specifically, a traction biasing mechanism 210 coupled to the firing trigger 34 includes a biasing wheel 278 that is frictionally coupled the handle housing 154 such that a distal firing motion imparts an engaging bias to the pawl 270, urging the pawl 270 into engagement with the linked rack 200. At the end of the stroke, the pawl 270 is lifted from firing engagement with links 196a-d by being brought into contact with beveled surface 284 of the closure yoke 162. A return motion of the firing mechanism 150 causes the biasing wheel 278 to impart a reversing bias to the pawl 270, holding pawl 270 above the linked rack 200 that is thereby held in place by the anti-backup mechanism 250. Upon full firing travel, the indicator gear 230 includes the curved ramp 430 that trips the anti-backup release lever 248 that forces the anti-backup plate 266 into an unlocked condition, allowing the linked rack 200, and thus the firing rod 32, to be withdrawn by a compressive force stored in the combination tension/compression spring 184. Thereby, the linked rack 200 is withdrawn into the pistol grip 36. Alternatively, during the firing strokes, the surgeon may depress the anti-backup release button 42 that causes the anti-backup release lever 248 to tip. The indicator knob 40 may advantageously allow the surgeon to know how far firing has progressed and to assist in retracting the E-beam 80 that has encountered binding.

Linked Firing Transmission With Automatic Retraction At End Of Full Firing Travel.

[00124] In FIGS. 31-32, a surgical stapling and severing instrument 1010 includes automatic knife retraction at the end of multiple stroke firing travel. Yet advantageous features described above are maintained for an end effector, which in the illustrative version is a staple applying apparatus 1012. With particular to FIG. 31, an anvil 1014

may be repeatably opened and closed about its pivotal attachment to an elongate (staple) channel 1016. The staple applying assembly 1012 is proximally attached to elongate shaft 1018, forming an implement portion 1022. When the staple applying assembly 1012 is closed, the implement portion 1022 presents a small cross-sectional area suitable for insertion through a trocar by an externally connected and manipulating handle 1020.

[00125] The handle 1020 has mounted on its handle housing 1154 user controls such as a rotation knob 1030 that rotates the elongate shaft 1018 and staple applying assembly 1012 about a longitudinal axis of the shaft 1018. A closure trigger 1026, which pivots in front of a pistol grip 1036 about a closure trigger pin 1152 engaged laterally across the handle housing 1154, is depressed to close the staple applying assembly 1012. A multiple stroke firing trigger 1034, which pivots in front of the closure trigger 1026, causes the staple applying assembly 1012 to simultaneously sever and staple tissue clamped therein. Since multiple firing strokes are employed to reduce the amount of force required per stroke by the surgeon's hand, right and left indicator wheels 1040, 1041 (formerly depicted in FIG. 33) rotate presenting indicia of the firing progress. For instance, full firing travel may require three full firing strokes and thus the indicator wheels 1040, 1041 rotate up to one-third of a revolution each per stroke. A manual firing release lever 1042 allows retraction before full firing travel if desired and allows assistance to retract in the presence of binding or a failure in the retraction bias. A closure release button 1038 is outwardly presented when the closure trigger 1026 is clamped and partial firing has not occurred that would prevent unclamping the closure trigger 1026.

[00126] With reference to FIGS. 31-33, the elongate shaft 1018 has as its outer structure a longitudinally reciprocating closure tube 1024 that pivots the anvil 1014 to effect closure in response to proximal depression of the closure trigger 1026 of the handle 1020. The elongate channel 1018 is connected to the handle 1020 by a frame 1028 (FIG. 33) that is internal to the closure tube 1024. The frame 1028 is rotatably engaged to the handle 1020 so that twisting the rotation knob 1030 (FIG. 33) causes rotation of the implement portion 1022. With particular reference to FIG. 33, each half shell of the rotation knob 1030 includes an inward projection 1031 that enters a respective longer side opening 1070 in the closure tube 1024 and inward to engage the

frame 1028 (not shown in FIGS. 31-33) that determines the rotated position of the implement portion 1022. The longitudinal length of the longer opening 1070 is sufficiently long to allow longitudinal closure motion the closure tube 1024.

[00127] An upper portion 1160 of the closure trigger 1026 pushes forward a closure yoke 1162 via a closure link 1164. The closure link 1164 is pivotally attached at its distal end by a closure yoke pin 1166 to the closure yoke 1162 and is pivotally attached at its proximal end by a closure link pin 1168. The closure trigger 1026 is urged to the open position by a closure trigger tension spring 1246 that is connected proximally to the upper portion 1160 of the closure trigger 1026 and a handle housing 1154 formed by right and left half shells 1156, 1158.

[00128] The upper portion 1160 of the closure trigger 1026 includes a proximal crest 1170 with an aft notch 1171. The closure release button 1038 and a pivoting locking arm 1172 are connected by a central lateral pivot 1173. A compression spring 1174 biases the closure release button 1038 proximally (clockwise about the central lateral pivot 1173 as viewed from the right). With the upper portion 1160 back when the closure trigger 1026 is released as depicted in FIGS. 34-35, the pivoting locking arm 1172 rides upon the proximal crest 1170 drawing in the closure release button 1038. When the closure trigger 1026 reaches its fully depressed position, it should be appreciated that the aft notch 1171 is presented below the pivoting locking arm 1172, which drops into and locks against the aft notch 1171 under the urging of the compression spring 1174. With the firing components retracted, manual depression of the closure release button 1038 rotates the pivoting locking arm 1172 upward unclamping the closure trigger 1026.

[00129] Once the closure trigger 1026 is proximally clamped, a firing rod 1032 is distally moved from the handle 1020 in response to the multiple stroke firing trigger 1034 being drawn to the pistol grip 1036 with the amount of firing travel visible to the surgeon on right and left indicator gauge wheels 1040, 1041. The firing trigger 1034 pivots about a firing trigger pin 1202 that laterally traverses and is engaged to the right and left half shells 1156, 1158.

[00130] A linked transmission firing mechanism 1150 is initially retracted, urged to remain in this position by the combination tension/compression spring 1184 that is

constrained within the pistol grip 1036 of the handle 1020, with its nonmoving end 1186 connected to a housing 1154 and a moving end 1188 connected to a downwardly flexed and proximal, retracted end 1190 of a steel band 1192.

[00131] A distally-disposed end 1194 of the steel band 1192 is attached to an attachment feature 1195 on a front link 1196a of a plurality of links 1196a-1196d that form a linked rack 1200. Linked rack 1200 is flexible yet has distal links that form a straight rigid rack assembly that may transfer a significant firing force through the firing rod 1032 in the implement portion 1022, yet readily retracts into the pistol grip 1036 to minimize the longitudinal length of the handle 1020. It should be appreciated that the combination tension/compression spring 1184 increases the amount of firing travel available while essentially reducing the minimum length by half over a single spring.

Anti-Backup Mechanism.

[00132] In FIGS. 33, 35, an anti-backup mechanism 1250 prevents the combination tension/compression spring 1184 from retracting the linked rack 1200 between firing strokes. A coupling slide tube 1131 abuts the first link 1196a and connects to the firing rod 1032 to communicate the firing motion. The firing rod 1032 extends proximally out of a proximal end of the frame 1028 and through a through hole 1408 of an anti-backup plate 1266. The through hole 1408 is sized to slidably receive the firing rod 1032 when perpendicularly aligned but to bind when tipped. A lower tab attachment 1271 extends proximally from a lower lip of the proximal end of the frame 1028, extending through an aperture 1269 on a lower edge of the anti-backup plate 1266. This lower tab attachment 1271 draws the lower portion of the anti-backup plate 1266 proximate to the frame 1028 so that the anti-backup plate 1266 is perpendicular when the firing rod 1032 is distally advanced and allowed to tip top aft into a binding state when the firing rod 1032 attempts to retract. An anti-backup compression spring 1264 is distally constrained by the proximal end of the frame 1028 and proximally abuts a top portion of the anti-backup plate 1266, biasing the anti-backup plate 1266 to a locking state.

[00133] Opposing the spring bias, an anti-backup cam tube 1268 slidably encompasses the coupling slide tube 1131 and abuts the anti-backup plate 1266. A

proximally projecting anti-backup yoke 1256 attached to the anti-backup cam tube 1268 extends overtop of the closure yoke 1162.

Linked Rack Triggered Automatic Retraction.

[00134] In FIGS. 31-41, a link triggered automatic retraction mechanism 1289 is incorporated into the surgical stapling and severing instrument 1010 to cause knife retraction at the end of full firing travel. To that end, the distal link 1196d includes a tang 1290 that projects upwardly when the distal link 1196d is advanced into rack channel 1291 formed in the closure yoke 1162. This tang 1290 is aligned to activate a bottom proximal cam 1292 on an anti-backup release lever 1248 (FIG. 40). With particular reference to FIGS. 38-39, structures formed in the right and left half shells 1156, 1158 constrain movement of the anti-backup release lever 1248. A pin receptacle 1296 and circular pin 1293 formed respectively between right and left half shells 1156, 1158 is received through a longitudinally elongate aperture 1294 formed in the anti-backup release lever 1248 distal to the bottom proximal cam 1292, thus allowing longitudinal translation as well as rotation about the circular pin 1293. In the right half shell 1156, a proximally open channel 1295 includes a proximal horizontal portion 1295a that communicates with an upwardly and distally angled portion 1295b that receives a rightward aft pin 1297 (FIG. 39) near the proximal end of the anti-backup release lever 1248, thus imparting an upward rotation as the anti-backup release lever 1248 reaches the distal most portion of its translation. A blocking structure 1333 formed in the right half shell 1156 proximal to the anti-backup release lever 1248 prevents proximal movement thereof once assembled to maintain rightward aft pin 1297 in the proximally open channel 1295.

[00135] As depicted in FIGS. 39, 40, a distal end 1254 of the anti-backup release lever 1248 thus is urged distally and downwardly, causing a rightward front pin 1298 to drop into distally open step structure 1299 formed in the right half shell 1156, which is urged into this engagement by a compression spring 1300 (FIG. 40) hooked to a leftward hook 1301 on the anti-backup release lever 1248 between the rightward front pin 1298 and the longitudinally elongate aperture 1294. The other end of the compression spring 1300 is attached to a hook 1302 (FIGS. 38, 40-41) formed in the right half shell 1156 in a more proximal and lower position just above the closure

yoke 1266. The compression spring 1300 thus pulls the distal end 1254 of the anti-backup release lever 1248 down and aft, which results in the rightward front pin 1298 locking into the distally open step structure 1299 when distally advanced.

[00136] In FIG. 41, thus, once tripped, the anti-backup release lever 1248 remains forward holding the anti-backup plate 1266 perpendicularly and thus allowing the linked rack 1200 to be retracted. When the closure yoke 1266 is subsequently retracted when unclamping the end effector 1012, an upwardly projecting reset tang 1303 on the closure yoke 1266 contacts a bottom distal cam 1305 of the anti-backup release lever 1248, lifting the rightward front pin 1298 out of the distally open step structure 1299 so that the anti-backup compression spring 1264 can proximally push the anti-backup cam tube 1268 and the anti-backup release lever 1248 to their retracted positions (FIG. 38).

Side Pawl Firing Mechanism.

[00137] In FIGS. 31-41, the alternative surgical stapling and severing instrument 1010 couples the firing trigger 1034 to the linked rack 1200 in a different manner than in FIGS. 1-31. With particular reference to FIGS. 32-37, the firing trigger 1034 pivots about a firing trigger pin 1202 that is connected to the housing 1154. An upper portion 1204 of the firing trigger 1034 moves distally about the firing trigger pin 1202 as the firing trigger 1034 is depressed towards pistol grip 1036, stretching a proximally placed firing trigger tension spring 1206 (FIG. 33) proximally connected between the upper portion 1204 of the firing trigger 1034 and the housing 1154. The upper portion 1204 of the firing trigger 1034 engages the linked rack 1200 during each firing trigger depression by a spring biased side pawl mechanism 1210 that also disengages when the firing trigger 1034 is released.

[00138] In particular, a ramped right-side track 1282 formed by a proximally and rightwardly facing beveled surface 1284 in each of the links 1196a-1196d is engaged by a side pawl assembly 1285. In particular, a pawl slide 1270 (FIGS. 33, 35) has right and left lower guides 1272 that slide respectively in a left track 1274 (FIG. 33) formed in the closure yoke 1266 below the rack channel 1291 and a right track 1275 in a closure yoke rail 1276 that parallels rack channel 1291 and is attached to a rack channel cover 1277 that closes a rightwardly open portion of the rack channel 1291 in

the closure yoke 1266 that is distal to the travel of the pawl slide 1270. In FIGS. 33-34, 37, a compression spring 1278 is attached between a hook 1279 on a top proximal position on the closure yoke rail 1276 and a hook 1280 on a distal right-side of the pawl slide 1270, which keeps the pawl slide 1270 drawn proximally into contact with the upper portion 1204 of the firing trigger 1034.

[00139] With particular reference to FIG. 33, a pawl block 1318 sits on the pawl slide 1270 pivoting about a vertical aft pin 1320 that passes through a left proximal corner of pawl block 1318 and pawl slide 1270. A kick-out block recess 1322 is formed on a distal portion of a top surface of the block 1318 to receive a kick-out block 1324 pivotally pinned therein by a vertical pin 1326 whose bottom tip extends into a pawl spring recess 1328 on a top surface of the pawl slide 1270. A pawl spring 1330 in the pawl spring recess 1328 extends to the right of the vertical front pin 1326 urging the pawl block 1318 to rotate counterclockwise when viewed from above into engagement with the ramped right-side track 1282. A small coil spring 1332 in the kick-out block recess 1322 urges the kick-out block 1324 to rotate clockwise when viewed from above, its proximal end urged into contact with a contoured lip 1334 formed in the closure yoke 1266 above the rack channel 1291.

[00140] As shown in FIG. 36, the stronger mechanical advantage of the pawl spring 1330 over the small coil spring 1332 means that the pawl block 1318 tends toward engagement with the kick-out block 1324 rotated clockwise,. In FIG. 37, as the firing trigger 1034 is fully depressed and begins to be release, the kick-out block 1324 encounters a ridge 1336 in the contoured lip 1334 as the pawl slide 1270 retracts, forcing the kick-out block 1324 to rotate clockwise when viewed from above and thereby kicking out the pawl block 1318 from engagement with the linked rack 1200. The shape of the kick-out block recess 1322 stops the clockwise rotation of the kick-out block 1324 to a perpendicular orientation to the contoured lip 1334 maintaining this disengagement during the full retraction and thereby eliminating a ratcheting noise.

Manual Retraction Of Multiple-Stroke Firing Mechanism.

[00141] In FIGS. 33, 35, 42-47, the second version of the surgical stapling and severing instrument 1010 includes an alternate manual retraction mechanism 1500

that provides firing position indication, manual release of the firing mechanism, manual retraction, and in one version (FIGS. 48-54) further performs automatic retraction at the end of full firing travel. In FIGS. 33, 42-43, in particular, a gear mechanism 1502 that also functions to visually indicate progress of firing travel and to manual retract the knife. A front idler gear 1220 that engages a toothed upper, left surface 1222 of the linked rack 1200 (FIGS. 33, 44-46). The front idler gear 1220 also engages an aft idler gear 1230 having a smaller right-side ratchet gear 1231. Both the front idler gear 1220 and aft idler gear 1230 are rotatably connected to the handle housing 1154 respectively on front idler axle 1232 and aft idler axle 1234. Each end of the aft axle 1232 extend through the respective right and left housing half shells 1156, 1158 and are attached to the left and right indicator gauge wheels 1040, 1041. Since the aft axle 1234 is free spinning in the handle housing 1154 and has a keyed engagement to the aft gear 1230, the indicator gauge wheels 1040, 1041 rotate with the aft gear 1230. The gear relationship between the linked rack 1200, idler gear 1220 and aft gear 1230 may be advantageously selected so that the toothed upper surface 1222 has tooth dimensions that are suitably strong and that the aft gear 1230 makes no more than one revolution during the full firing travel of the linked transmission firing mechanism 1150.

[00142] The smaller right-side ratchet gear 1231 of the aft idler gear 1230 extends into a hub 1506 of the manual retraction lever 1024, specifically aligned with a vertical longitudinally-aligned slot 1508 (FIG. 42) bisecting the hub 1506. A lateral through hole 1510 of the hub 1506 communicates with an upper recess 1512. A front portion 1514 is shaped to receive a proximally directed locking pawl 1516 that pivots about a rightward lateral pin 1518 formed in a distal end of the upper recess 1512. An aft portion 1520 is shaped to receive an L-shaped spring tab 1522 that urges the locking pawl 1516 downward into engagement with the right-side smaller ratchet gear 1231. A hold-up structure 1524 (FIG. 38, 45) projects from the right half shell 1156 into the upper recess 1512 holding up the locking pawl 1516 from engaging the smaller right-side ratchet gear 1231 when the manual retraction lever 1042 is down (FIG. 45). A coil spring 1525 (FIG. 33) urges the manual retraction lever 1042 down.

[00143] In use, as depicted in FIGS. 44-45, the combination tension/compression spring 1184 may become disconnected with the linked rack distally positioned. In

FIGS. 46-47, as the manual retraction lever 1042 is raised, the locking pawl 1516 rotates clockwise and no longer is held up by the hold-up structure 1524 and engages the smaller right-side ratcheting gear 1231, rotating the aft idler gear 1230 clockwise when viewed from the left. Thus, the forward idler gear 1220 responds counterclockwise retracting the linked rack 1200. In addition, a rightward curved ridge 1530 projects out from the hub 1506, sized to contact and distally move the anti-backup release lever 1248 to release the anti-backup mechanism 1250 as the manual retraction lever 1042 is rotated.

Wheel Cam Automatic Retraction.

[00144] In FIGS. 48-54, an alternate automatic retraction mechanism 1600 for a surgical stapling and severing instrument 1010a incorporates automatic retraction at the end of full firing travel into a front idler gear 1220a having a tooth 1602 that moves within a circular groove 1604 in a cam wheel 1606 until encountering a blockage 1608 after nearly a full rotation corresponding to three firing strokes. A rightward ridge 1610 is rotated upward into contact a bottom cam recess 1612 to distally move an anti-backup release lever 1248a.

[00145] With particular reference to FIG. 49, the alternate anti-backup release lever 1248a includes the distal end 1254 that operates as previously described. The circular pin 1293 and pin receptacle 1296 formed between right and left half shells 1156, 1158 is received through a generally rectangular aperture 1294a formed in the anti-backup release lever 1248a aft of the bottom cam 1192, thus allowing longitudinal translation as well as downward locking motion of the distal end 1254 of the alternate anti-backup release lever 1248a. In the right half shell 1156, a horizontal proximally open channel 1295a receives the rightward aft pin 1297 near the proximal end of the anti-backup release lever 1248a.

[00146] In operation, before firing in FIGS. 50, 50A, the linked rack 200 is retracted and the anti-backup cam tube 1268 is retracted, locking the anti-backup mechanism 1250 as the anti-backup compression spring 1264 proximally tips the anti-backup plate 1266. The alternate automatic retraction mechanism 1600 is at an initial state with the anti-backup release lever 1248a retracted with link 196a in contact with the forward idler gear 1220a. The tooth 1602 is at a six o'clock position with full travel of

the circular groove 1604 progressing counterclockwise thereof with the rightward ridge 1610 just proximal to the tooth 1602. In FIGS. 51, 51A, one firing stroke has occurred moving up one distal link 196b into contact with the forward idler gear 1220a. The tooth 1602 has progressed one third of a turn through the circular groove 1604 of the immobile cam wheel 1606. In FIGS. 52, 52A, a second firing stroke has occurred moving up one more link 196c into contact with the forward idler gear 1220a. The tooth 1602 has progressed two thirds of a turn through the circular groove 1604 of the immobile cam wheel 1606. In FIGS. 53, 53A, a third firing stroke has occurred moving up one distal link 196d into contact with the forward idler gear 1220a. The tooth 1602 has progressed fully around the circular groove 1604 into contact with the blockage 1608 initiating counterclockwise rotation (when viewed from the right) of the cam wheel 1606 bringing the rightward ridge 1608 into contact with the anti-backup release lever 1248a. In FIG. 54, the anti-backup release lever 1248a has moved distally in response thereto, locking the rightward front pin 1298 into the distally open step structure 1299 and releasing the anti-backup mechanism 1250.

[00147] While the present invention has been illustrated by description of several embodiments and while the illustrative embodiments have been described in considerable detail, it is not the intention of the applicant to restrict or in any way limit the scope of the appended claims to such detail. Additional advantages and modifications may readily appear to those skilled in the art.

[00148] For instance, while a surgical stapling and severing instrument 10 is described herein that advantageously has separate and distinct closing and firing actuation, providing clinical flexibility. However, it should be appreciated that applications consistent with the present invention may include a handle that converts a single user actuation into a firing motion that closes and fires the instrument.

[00149] In addition, while a manually actuated handle is illustrated, a motorized or otherwise powered handle may benefit from incorporating a linked rack as described herein, allowing reduction of the size of the handle or other benefits. For instance, while partially stowing the linked rack into the pistol grip is convenient, it should be

appreciated that the pivot connection between links allows for stowing the link parallel to the straight portion defined by the shaft and the barrel of the handle.

[00150] As another example, a surgical instrument may include a straight rack that incorporates features consistent with aspects of the invention such as automatic retraction at the end of firing travel and manual firing retraction.

[00151] What is claimed is:

Claims

1. A surgical instrument, comprising:
 - an end effector responsive to a longitudinal firing motion to perform a surgical operation;
 - a shaft connected to the end effector;
 - a firing member slidably receiving by the shaft to transfer the firing motion to the end effector between an unfired position and a fully fired position;
 - a firing mechanism responsive to a plurality of firing strokes to advance the firing member down the shaft;
 - a retraction spring biasing the firing member proximally away from the shaft;
 - an anti-backup mechanism engageable to the firing member in response to a proximal movement thereof; and
 - an anti-backup release mechanism operatively configured to lock the anti-backup mechanism in a disengaged state upon reaching full firing travel of the firing member.
2. The surgical instrument of claim 1, wherein the anti-backup mechanism comprises:
 - a locking plate including an aperture circumferentially encompassing the firing member, the locking plate pivotal between a locking position wherein the aperture lockingly engages the firing member and an unlocking position wherein the aperture slidably engages the firing member,
 - an anti-backup spring biasing the locking plate to the locking position; and
 - an anti-backup release lever positioned to oppose the bias of the anti-backup spring.
3. The surgical instrument of claim 1, wherein the handle is operatively configured to hold the end effector closed during firing strokes with a distally advanced closure yoke, the closure yoke including an unlocking feature aligned when released to unlock the anti-backup mechanism.
4. The surgical instrument of claim 1, further comprising a handle wherein the firing member includes a rack contained in the handle and attached to the retraction spring, the anti-backup release mechanism coupled to the rack to distally move the anti-backup release mechanism.

5. The surgical instrument of claim 4, wherein the anti-backup release member comprises an anti-backup release lever having a distal end and a proximal end, the anti-backup release lever constrained within the handle such that the distal end moves distally and downwardly into contact with the anti-backup mechanism in response to the proximal end being distally displaced.
6. The surgical instrument of claim 5, wherein the rack includes a proximally positioned tang aligned to distally move the proximal end of the anti-backup release lever.
7. The surgical instrument of claim 5, further comprising a gear mechanism coupled to the rack, operatively configured to rotate a cam into distally moving contact with the proximal end of the anti-backup release lever in response to full firing travel of the rack.
8. The surgical instrument of claim 7, wherein the gear mechanism comprises an idler gear engaged to the rack and sized to make one revolution in response to full firing travel of the rack, and comprises a cam wheel containing the cam responsive to the idler gear to distally move the anti-backup release lever.
9. The surgical instrument of claim 4, wherein the end effector comprises:
 - an elongate channel connected to the shaft;
 - an anvil pivotally coupled to said elongate channel for clamping tissue; and
 - a staple cartridge received in said elongate channel;wherein said firing member distally terminates in a firing bar operably configured to actuate the staple cartridge to form staples in the clamped tissue.
10. A surgical instrument, comprising:
 - an end effector responsive to a longitudinal firing motion to perform a surgical operation, comprising an elongate channel, an anvil pivotally coupled to the elongate channel for clamping tissue, and a staple cartridge received in the elongate channel;
 - a shaft connected to the elongate channel of the end effector;
 - a firing member slidably received by the shaft to transfer the firing motion to the end effector to actuate the staple cartridge and to sever the clamped tissue;
 - a retraction spring biasing the firing member proximally away from the shaft;

a firing trigger;
a firing mechanism responsive to a plurality of firing strokes of the firing trigger selectively engaging a pawl into engagement with the firing member to effect full firing travel thereof;
an anti-backup mechanism engageable to the firing member in response to a proximal movement thereof, comprising:
a locking plate including an aperture circumferentially encompassing the firing member, the locking plate pivotal between a locking position wherein the aperture lockingly engages the firing member and an unlocking position wherein the aperture slidingly engages the firing member,
an anti-backup spring biasing the locking plate to the locking position, and
an anti-backup release lever positioned to oppose the bias of the anti-backup spring by having a distal end and a proximal end, the anti-backup release lever constrained such that the distal end moves distally and downwardly into contact with the anti-backup mechanism in response to the proximal end being distally displaced; and
an anti-backup release mechanism operatively configured to lock the anti-backup mechanism in a disengaged state upon reaching full firing travel of the firing member.

11. The surgical instrument of claim 10, wherein the firing member includes a proximally positioned tang aligned to distally move the proximal end of the anti-backup release lever.

12. The surgical instrument of claim 11, wherein the firing member further comprises a rack containing the tang.

13. The surgical instrument of claim 12, further comprising a handle having a downward grip, wherein the rack further comprises a link rank downwardly bendable into the downward grip.

14. The surgical instrument of claim 10, further comprising a gear mechanism coupled to the rack operatively configured to rotate a cam wheel into distally moving contact with the proximal end of the anti-backup release lever in response to full firing travel of the rack.

15. The surgical instrument of claim 10, wherein the firing member includes a rack, the surgical instrument further comprising a gear mechanism coupled to the rack operatively configured to rotate a cam into distally moving contact with the proximal end of the anti-backup release lever in response to full firing travel of the rack.

16. The surgical instrument of claim 15, wherein the gear mechanism comprises an idler gear engaged to the rack and sized to make one revolution in response to full firing travel of the rack, and comprises a cam wheel containing the cam responsive to the idler gear to distally move the anti-backup release lever.

17. A surgical instrument, comprising:

- a staple applying assembly;

- a shaft connected to the elongate channel of the staple applying assembly;

- a firing member slidably receiving by the shaft to transfer a firing motion to the staple applying assembly;

- a retraction spring biasing the firing member proximally away from the shaft;

- an anti-backup mechanism having a locking member biased into a binding, nonperpendicular contact with the firing member;

- an anti-backup release lever positionable to move the locking member of the anti-backup mechanism into nonbinding, perpendicular contact with the firing member; and

- a firing mechanism responsive to full firing travel of the firing member to position the anti-backup release lever.

18. The surgical instrument of claim 17, wherein the firing member includes a rack, the surgical instrument further comprising a gear mechanism coupled to the rack operatively configured to rotate a cam into distally moving contact with the proximal end of the anti-backup release lever in response to full firing travel of the rack.

19. The surgical instrument of claim 18, wherein the gear mechanism comprises an idler gear engaged to the rack and sized to make one revolution in response to full firing travel of the rack, and comprises a cam wheel containing the cam responsive to the idler gear to distally move the anti-backup release lever.

20. The surgical instrument of claim 17, further comprising a handle that constrains movement of the anti-backup release lever, wherein the anti-backup release lever has a distal end and a proximal end, the anti-backup release lever constrained such that the distal end moves distally and downwardly into contact with the anti-backup mechanism in response to the proximal end being distally displaced, wherein the firing member includes a rack containing a proximally positioned tang aligned to distally move the proximal end of the anti-backup release lever.

21. The surgical instrument of claim 20, wherein the distal portion includes a forward pin urged downwardly into a locking structure by a compression spring when distally moved, wherein the handle is operatively configured to hold the end effector closed during firing strokes with a distally advanced closure yoke, the closure yoke including an unlocking feature aligned when released to unlock the anti-backup mechanism by raising the forward pin out of the locking structure.