



US006745977B1

(12) **United States Patent**
Long et al.

(10) **Patent No.:** **US 6,745,977 B1**
(45) **Date of Patent:** **Jun. 8, 2004**

(54) **FLYING CAR**

(76) Inventors: **Larry D. Long**, 215 S. Fulton St.,
Avon, IL (US) 61415; **Terry L. Sturgeon**, 5341 Summit, Bartonville, IL
(US) 61607

(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this
patent is extended or adjusted under 35
U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

3,946,970 A	3/1976	Blankenship	
4,457,476 A	7/1984	Andresevit	
4,955,962 A	9/1990	Mell	
5,069,649 A	12/1991	Wu	
5,141,173 A	* 8/1992	Lay	244/2
5,232,391 A	8/1993	Vaughns et al.	
5,360,367 A	11/1994	Ho	
5,505,407 A	* 4/1996	Chiappetta	244/2
5,890,441 A	* 4/1999	Swinson et al.	244/12.3
6,517,026 B1	* 2/2003	Smith	244/2

* cited by examiner

(21) Appl. No.: **10/644,636**

(22) Filed: **Aug. 21, 2003**

(51) Int. Cl.⁷ **B64C 37/02**

(52) U.S. Cl. **244/2; 244/17.25; 244/23 B;**
244/221

(58) Field of Search 244/2, 17.17, 17.23,
244/17.25, 23 A, 23 B, 221, 234

(56) **References Cited**

U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS

3,503,573 A 3/1970 Modesti

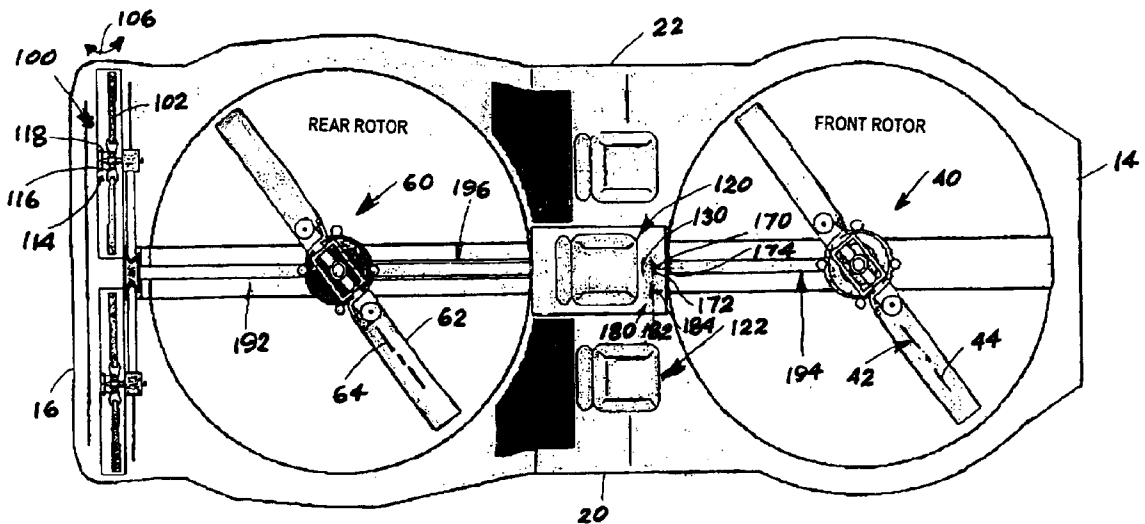
Primary Examiner—J. Woodrow Eldred

(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm*—Donald R. Schoonover

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A vehicle is in the general shape of a land vehicle, such as a car, but has a plurality of rotors so the vehicle is capable of flight in the manner of a VTOL or a helicopter. The vehicle has foot pedals and steering that can be operated in the manner similar to that of a car.

1 Claim, 6 Drawing Sheets



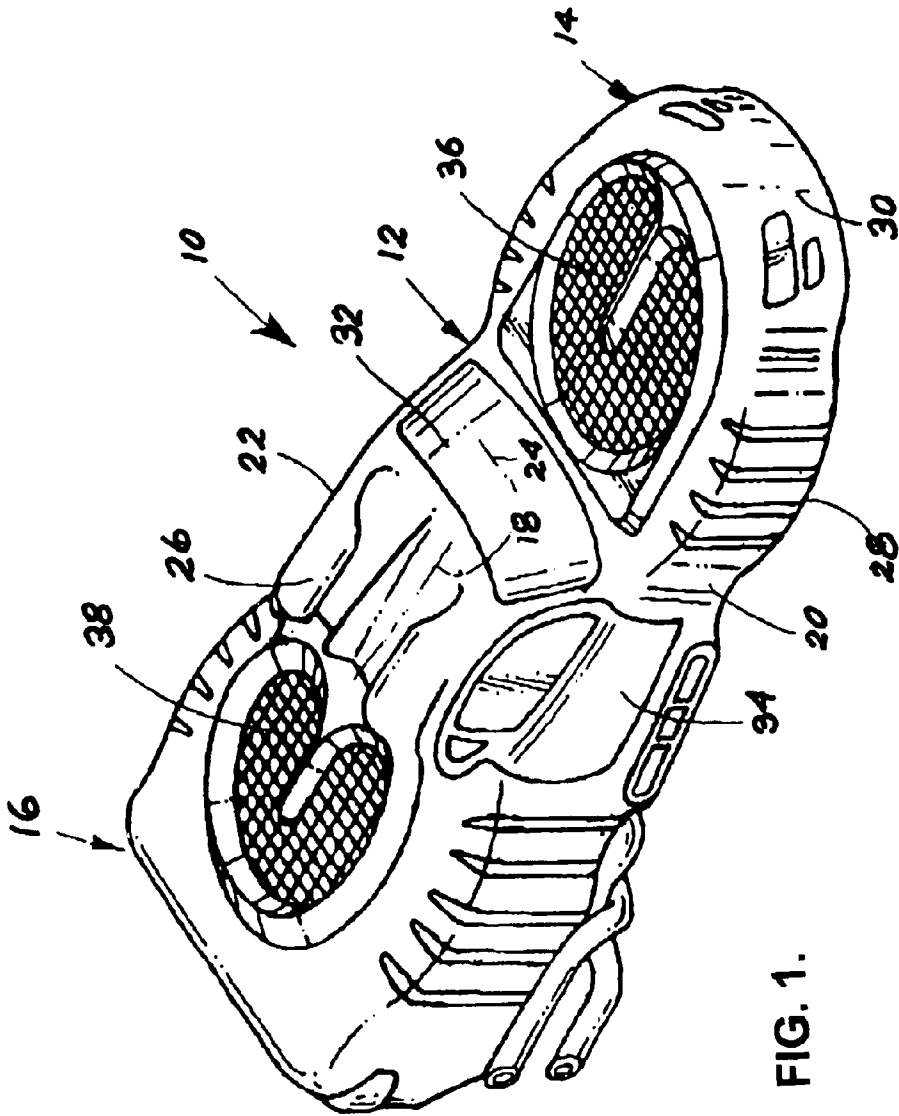


FIG. 1.

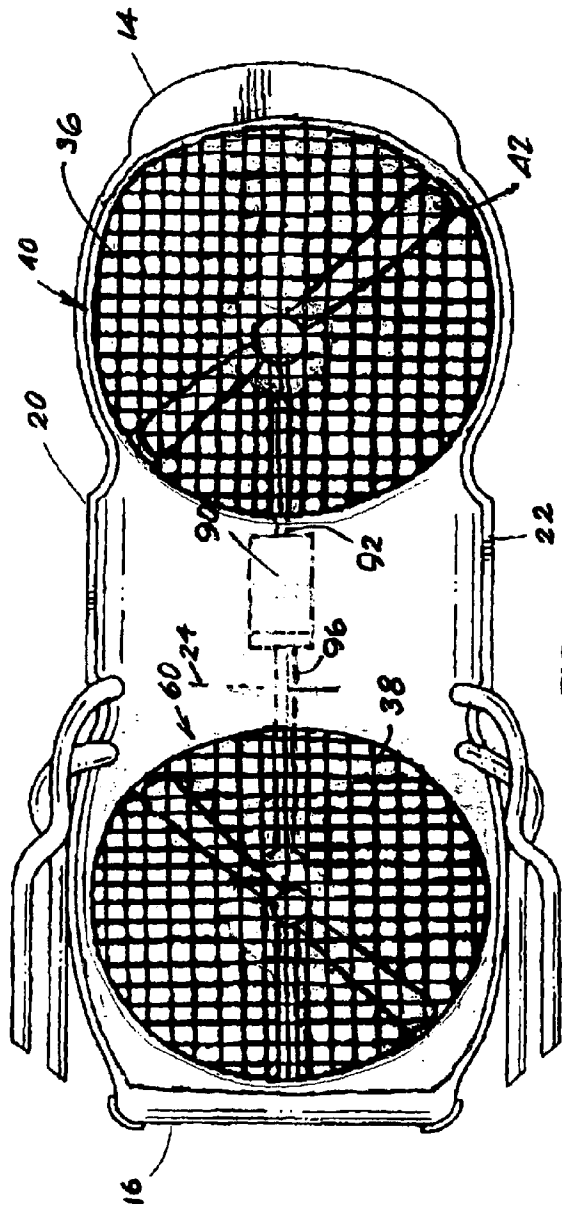
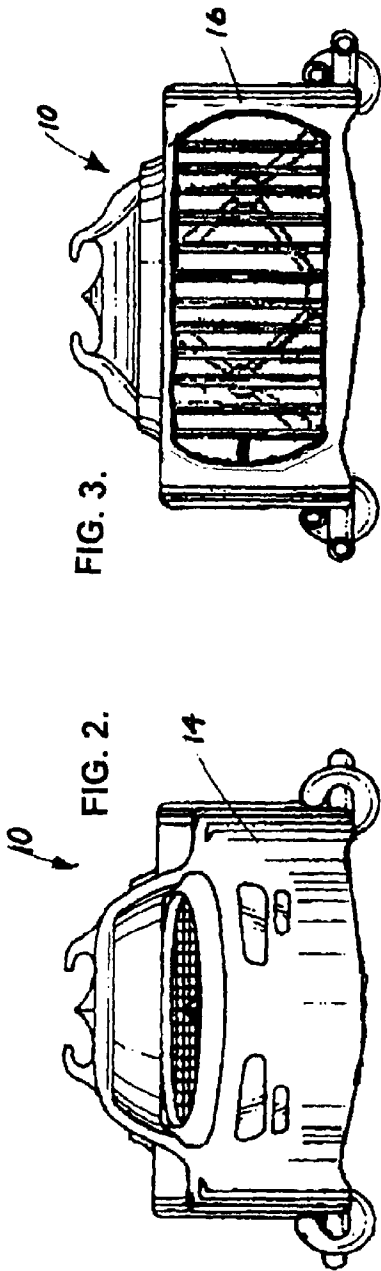


FIG. 3.

FIG. 2.

FIG. 4.

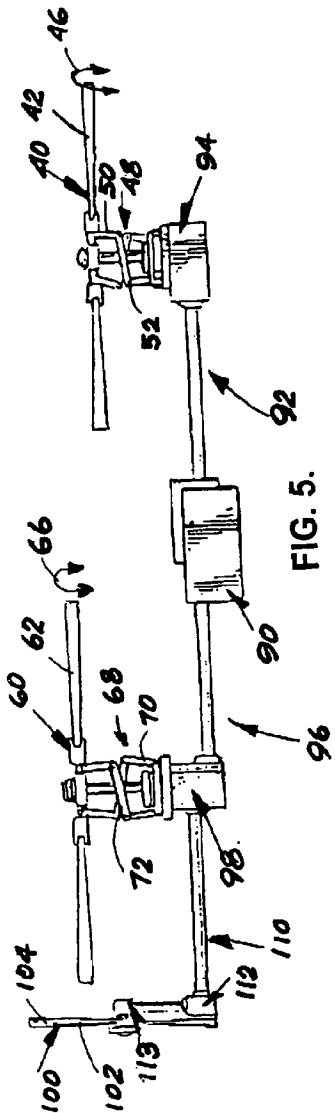


FIG. 5.

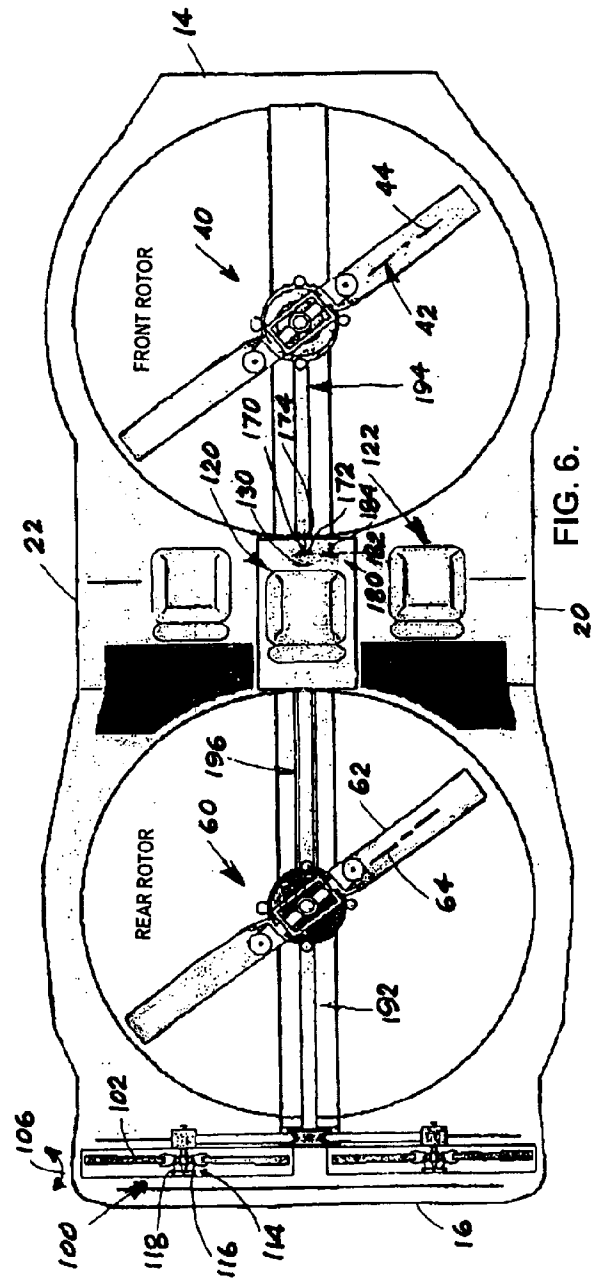


FIG. 6.

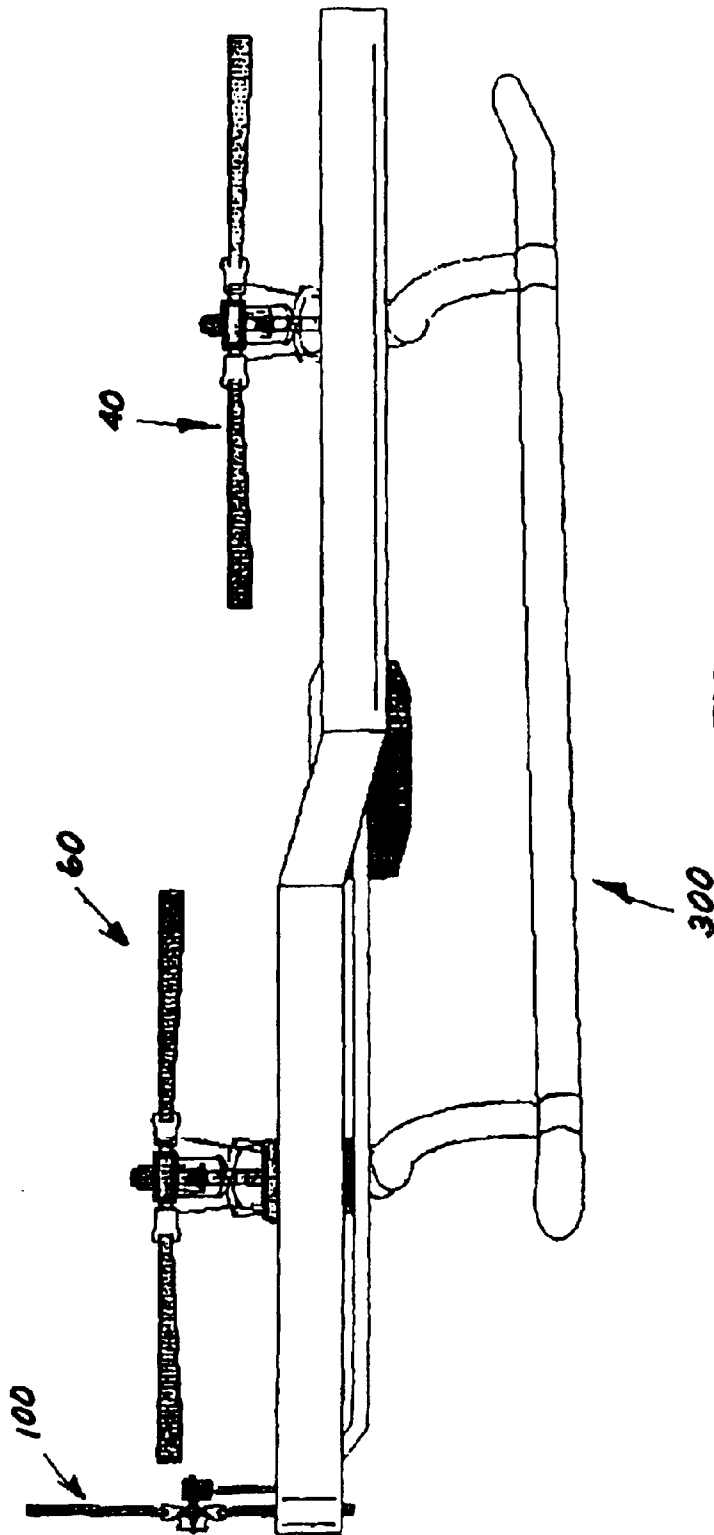


FIG. 7.

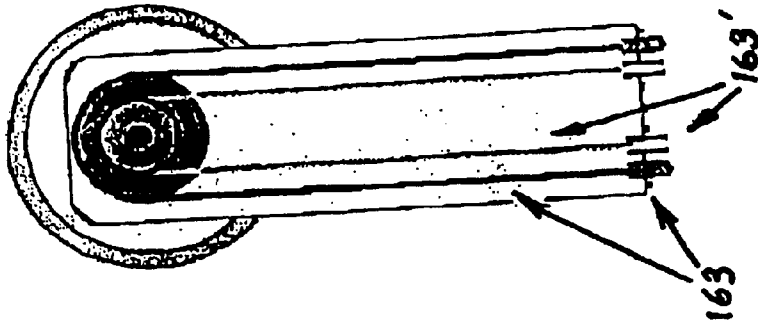


FIG. 9.

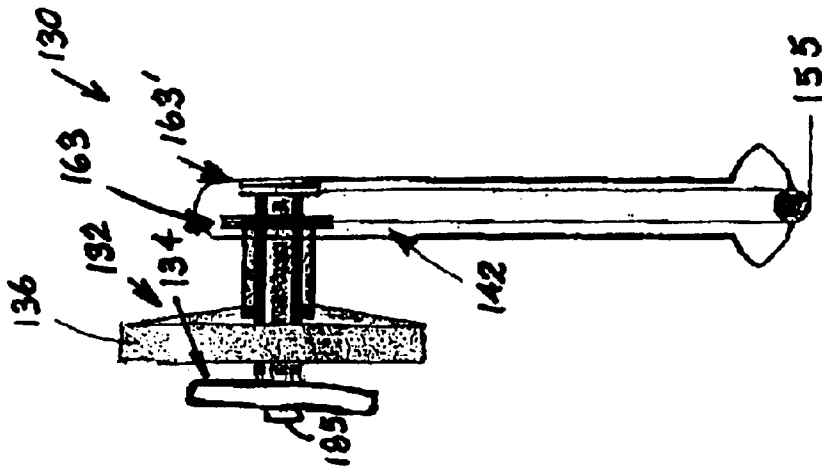


FIG. 8.

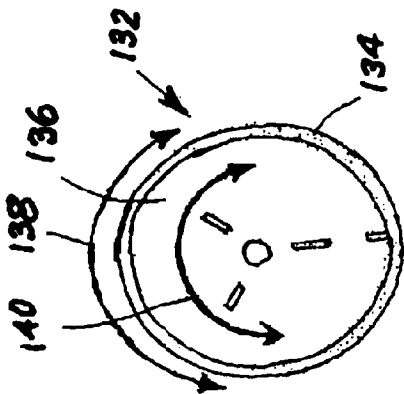


FIG. 10.

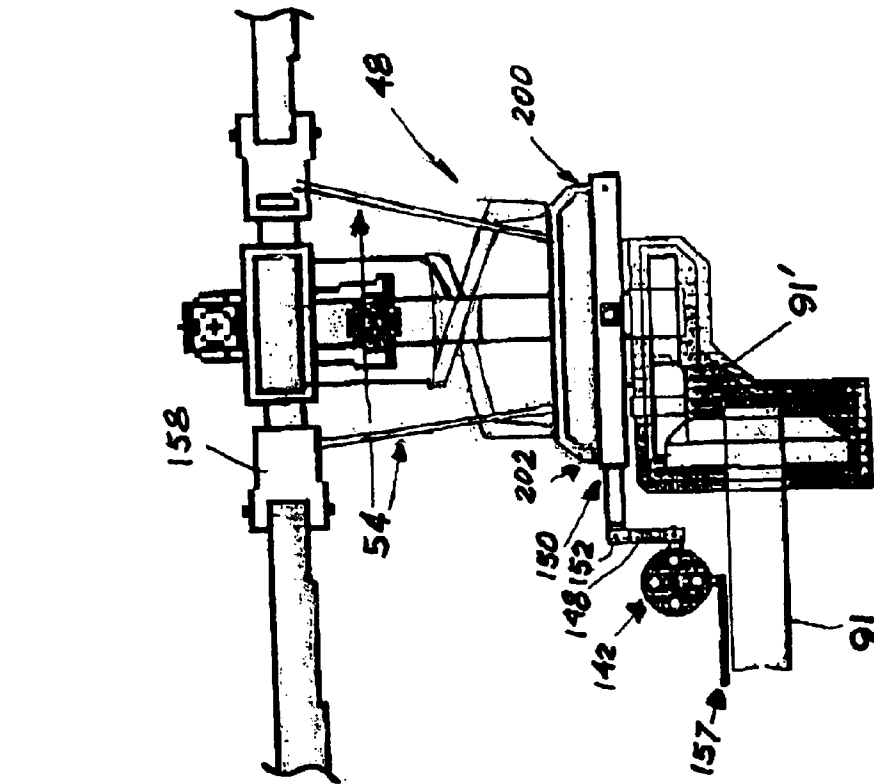


FIG. 11.

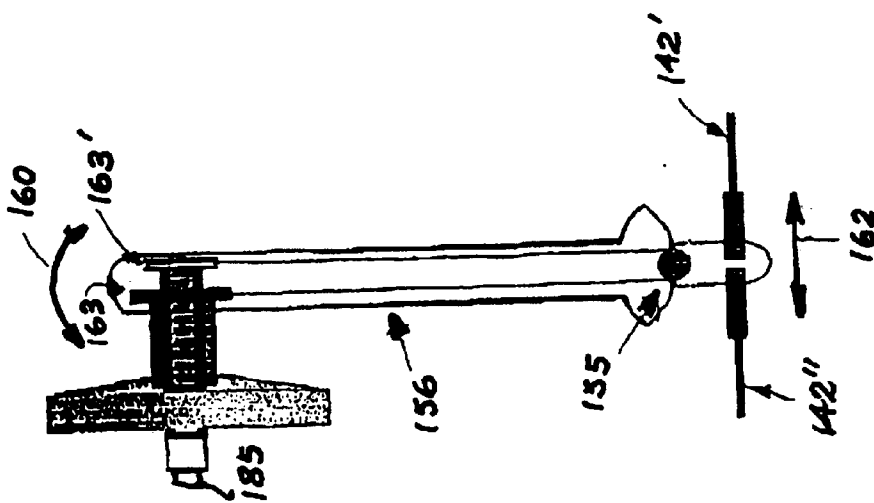


FIG. 12.

1

FLYING CAR

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to the general art of motor vehicles, and to the particular field of flying vehicles.

2. Discussion of the Related Art

As anyone who has driven on roadways near any major city in the world will attest, people of today are very mobile and the number of land vehicles on the roads, both major roads and secondary roads, is increasing at nearly alarming rates. Roads are becoming more and more congested with each passing day. The roadways are shared by commuters, police and fire departments, rescue squads, as well as the military. This adds still further to the congestion on the roadways. The congestion is not only frustrating to those trapped in it, it is wasteful of time and energy.

Therefore, there is a need for a mode of personal transportation that will bypass the congestion on roadways.

In order to be most efficient, any mode of personal transportation should be as agile as possible and as maneuverable as possible. This will permit the user to move into all of the areas now accessed by automobiles and also to maneuver near congested areas as well.

Many land vehicles that are used by civilians can also be very useful to the military as well as civilian defense. For this reason, these vehicles also should be as agile and as maneuverable as well.

Therefore, there is a need for a highly maneuverable and agile transportation vehicle.

One alternative to land vehicle transportation is air vehicle transportation. This form of transportation has, historically, included airplanes as well as helicopters. While this form of transportation has been fairly efficient, it generally requires a user to depart and arrive at specific locations that are designed to accommodate aircraft. These areas vary from airports to special landing pads. This requirement may add to vehicular congestion as people travel to and from the designated landing and takeoff areas, generally by land vehicle. Often this type of transportation is very expensive in addition to being somewhat inconvenient in both time and logistics.

Therefore, there is a need for a highly maneuverable and agile transportation vehicle that is capable of flight.

As with any product that is marketed to the public, the easier such a vehicle is to operate, the more successful it will be. One problem with many flying vehicles, such as helicopters or the like, is that they are difficult and complicated to operate. Thus, the public will be slow to accept such vehicles.

Therefore, there is a need for a highly maneuverable and agile transportation vehicle that is capable of flight and is easy to operate.

As mentioned above, not only are those in the public interested in alternative modes of transportation, those in the military and civil defense, as well as those in the rescue and fire industries, are also interested in avoiding the congested roadways that they now have to use.

Therefore, there is a need for a vehicle that can be used not only by the public for general transportation but also by the military as well as the civil defense and rescue industries to meet their needs as well.

PRINCIPAL OBJECTS OF THE INVENTION

It is a main object of the present invention to provide a highly maneuverable and agile transportation vehicle.

2

It is another object of the present invention to provide a highly maneuverable and agile transportation vehicle which is capable of flight.

It is another object of the present invention to provide a highly maneuverable and agile transportation vehicle and which is extremely versatile.

It is another object of the present invention to provide a highly maneuverable and agile transportation vehicle and which is extremely versatile and which is easy to operate.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

These, and other, objects are achieved by a personal vehicle that has a general appearance of a land vehicle but which is driven by rotors in the manner of a helicopter so the vehicle will fly. The vehicle has two horizontally oriented rotors as well as a vertically oriented rotor and is controlled by a compound steering wheel. The vehicle also includes brakes and the like that resemble the equipment associated with cars so a driver can operate the flying vehicle in the manner of a car with which he or she is familiar.

The vehicle can thus be operated in the manner of a car, but will have flight capability in the manner of a Vertical Take-Off and Landing (VTOL) vehicle, and thus will be useful in avoiding and relieving congestion on the roadways. The vehicle is designed to be easy to operate so it will be attractive to the general public. The vehicle will be as agile and as maneuverable as a small helicopter so the vehicle can be maneuvered and operated in congested areas while still being safe. The vehicle will not be subject to the congestion associated with land vehicles and thus will provide significant advantages to an operator. Since the vehicle is agile and maneuverable, it will be attractive to the military as well as to others such as police, fire, rescue and civil defense personnel.

The vehicle can also be used by the airline industry as a shuttle between airports, or even between locations in a single airport. This will relieve much pressure on present airline traffic routes as well as providing an important new product for both the airline manufacturers and the land vehicle manufacturers.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING FIGURES

FIG. 1 is a front and top perspective view of a vehicle embodying the present invention.

FIG. 2 is a front elevational view thereof.

FIG. 3 is a rear elevational view thereof.

FIG. 4 is a bottom view thereof.

FIG. 5 shows the rotors of the vehicle embodying the present invention.

FIG. 6 shows the rotors in place on the vehicle.

FIG. 7 is a side elevational view of an alternative form of the vehicle.

FIG. 8 is a side elevational view of a compound steering wheel used in the vehicle embodying the present invention.

FIG. 9 is a front elevational view of the steering wheel.

FIG. 10 is a schematic of the steering wheel.

FIG. 11 is a side elevational view of the steering wheel illustrating one method of controlling the vehicle using the steering wheel.

FIG. 12 shows a connection to one of the rotors of the vehicle.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Other objects, features and advantages of the invention will become apparent from a consideration of the following detailed description and the accompanying drawings.

Referring to the figures, it can be understood that the present invention is embodied in a motor vehicle **10** that operates in the manner of a VTOL type aircraft but is sized and designed to be a personal vehicle. Motor vehicle **10** comprises a main body **12** that is in the shape of a land vehicle car and which has a front end **14**, a rear end **16** and a longitudinal axis **18** which extends between the front end **14** and the rear end **16**. The main body **12** further includes a first side **20**, a second side **22**, and a transverse axis **24** which extends between the first side **20** and the second side **22**. The main body **12** further includes a top **26**, a bottom **28**, and a height dimension **30** which extends between the top **26** and the bottom **28**. A windshield **32** and doors **34** can also be included so the vehicle **10** further resembles a car. A front vent area **36** and a rear vent area **38** are also defined in the main body **12**.

A front rotor **40** is mounted on the main body **12** near the front end **14** of the main body **12** and is oriented to rotate in a horizontal plane to produce lift to the vehicle **10**. The front rotor **40** includes at least one rotor blade **42** that includes a longitudinal axis **44** and which is mounted to move in a roll motion, indicated by double-headed arrow **46** in FIG. 5, about the longitudinal axis **44** of the rotor blade **42** of the front rotor **40**. Rotor blade **42** is moved by collective sleeve swash plate and scissor assembly **48** which includes lever arms, such as lever arm **50**, pivots, such as pivot **52** and collective control tubes **54**.

A rear rotor **60** is mounted on the main body **12** near the rear end **16** of the main body **12** and oriented to rotate in a horizontal plane to produce lift to the vehicle **10**. The rear rotor **60** includes at least one rotor blade **62** that includes a longitudinal axis **64**. Rotor blade **62** is mounted to move in a roll motion about the longitudinal axis **64** of the rotor blade **62** of the rear rotor **60** as indicated by the double-headed arrow **66** shown in FIG. 5. Rotor blade **62** is moved by mechanism **68** which includes lever arms, such as lever arm **70** and pivots, such as pivot **72**.

The front rotor **40** is set lower than the rear rotor **60** to provide greater viewing area for the driver of the vehicle **10**.

A power plant **90** is mounted on the main body **12** between the front end **14** of the main body **12** and the rear end **16** of the main body **12**. The power plant **90** can be an internal combustion engine or any other engine suitable for vehicle **10**. The power plant **90** is set to the lowest possible position to provide for a low center of gravity and to maintain a stabilized aerodynamic integrity. The power plant **90** is connected to the rotors by drive shafts, such as drive shaft **91** and gear systems such as gear system **91'** to transfer power from the power plant **90** to the rotors **40**, **60**.

A front rotor connection system **92** couples the power plant **90** to the front rotor **40** and includes a suitable gear mechanism **94** to translate motion associated with the power plant **90** into motion suitable for use by the front rotor **40**.

A rear rotor connection system **96** couples the power plant **90** to the rear rotor **60** and includes a suitable gear mechanism **98** to translate motion associated with the power plant **90** into motion suitable for use by the rear rotor **60**. The rear rotor connection system **96** is similar to the just-described connection system **92** associated with the front rotor **40** and includes a drive shaft and appropriate gearing to transfer motion of the drive shaft to the rear rotor **60**.

A tail rotor **100** is mounted on the rear end **16** of the main body **12** and is oriented to rotate in a vertical plane and provides thrust propulsion to the main body **12** in the direction of the longitudinal axis **18** of the main body **12**. The tail rotor **100** has at least one rotor blade **102** that

includes a longitudinal axis **104**. Rotor blade **102** is mounted to rotate in a roll direction about the longitudinal axis **104** of the rotor blade **102** of the tail rotor **100** as indicated by double-headed arrow **106** in FIG. 6 to have a positive pitch, a negative pitch and a neutral pitch.

A tail rotor connection system **110** couples the tail rotor **100** to the power plant **90** and includes suitable gear mechanisms **112** and **113** to translate motion associated with the power plant **90** into motion suitable for use by the tail rotor **100**. Rotor blade **102** is moved by mechanism **114** which includes lever arms, such as lever arm **116** and pivots, such as pivot **118**. The tail rotor connection system **110** is similar to the just-described connection system associated with the front rotor **40** and includes a drive shaft and appropriate gearing to transfer motion of the drive shaft to the tail rotor **100**.

A driver's seat **120** is mounted on the main body **12** between the front rotor **40** and the rear rotor **60**. A passenger seat **122** is mounted on the main body **12** adjacent to the driver's seat **120**. Further passenger seats can be included as desired.

A steering mechanism **130** is mounted on the main body **12** and is shown in FIGS. 8, 9 and 10. The steering mechanism **130** includes a compound steering wheel **132** which is mounted on the main body **12** adjacent to the driver's seat **120**. The compound steering wheel **132** includes an outer steering wheel **134** and an inner steering wheel **136**. The outer steering wheel **134** and the inner steering wheel **136** are rotatable in directions indicated by double-headed arrows **138** and **140**.

A steering connection **142**, which can include levers **148** and **150** connected together by a pivot **152** and includes a portion **142'** which connects the outer steering wheel **134** to the front rotor **40** and a portion **142''** which connects the inner steering wheel **136** to the rear rotor **60**.

The steering wheel **132** is movably mounted on the main body **12** by a pivot **155** to be movable in the direction of the longitudinal axis **18** of the main body **12** between a forward orientation and a rearward orientation as indicated by the double-headed arrows **160** and **162** in FIG. 11.

When steering column **156** is pulled toward the driver or pilot, this action pushes collective control **157** activating pivot cam **154** upwardly forcing the collective control lever **150** to apply positive pitch to blade grips **158** causing lift. The control rods are connected to a swash plate and the swash plate is connected to the collective sleeve assembly **48**. When the steering column **156** is pushed away from the pilot, this action pulls the collective controls **157** and reverses the process and decreases the applied pitch back to a neutral pitch. This action reduces lift causing the craft to lower its altitude.

The outer steering wheel **134** controls the cyclic articulation of the front main rotor system. If the wheel **134** is turned clockwise, this activates a cable and pulley system **163** that connects to a swash plate and scissor assembly causing the rotor blades to tilt to the right. If the steering wheel **134** is turned counter-clockwise, then the rotor blades are tilted to the left. Tilting the rotor blades to the right or left causes the thrust vector to shift to the opposite direction providing thrust to turn the vehicle **10** in the direction of steering. The inner steering wheel **136** controls the cyclic articulation of the rear main rotor system using a cable and pulley system **163'**. This control is the same as is utilized for the outer steering wheel **134**, only providing right and left tilt to the blades **62** of the rear rotor **60**.

The separation of the cyclic articulation of the front and rear rotor systems allows for precision turning. The vehicle

may turn utilizing the front rotor **40** causing the nose of the vehicle **10** to lead in the direction of steering. The vehicle may turn utilizing the rear rotor **60**, causing the tail end of the vehicle **10** to swing in the direction of steering which, in effect, causes the nose to turn in the opposite direction of steering. Turning both wheels **134**, **136** in the same direction causes the craft **10** to strafe sideways in the direction of steering. Turning both wheels **134**, **136** in opposite directions causes the vehicle **10** to spin at the central fulcrum of the front and rear rotors **40**, **60** allowing for 180° turns in place. This provide agility and maneuverability to the vehicle **10**.

A brake mechanism **170** is mounted on the main body **12** in front of the driver's seat **120**. The brake mechanism **170** includes a brake pedal **172** located in front of the driver's seat **120** and a brake connection **174** connecting the brake pedal **172** to the rotor blade **102** of the tail rotor **100** to move the rotor blade **102** of the tail rotor **100** in accordance with the position of the brake pedal **172** between a positive pitch position, a negative pitch position, and a neutral pitch position of the rotor blade **102** of the tail rotor **100**.

An accelerator mechanism **180** is mounted on the main body **12** and includes an accelerator pedal **182** mounted on the main body **12** adjacent to the driver's seat **120** and an accelerator mechanism **184** connecting the accelerator pedal **182** to the rotor blade **102** of the tail rotor **100** to vary the pitch of the rotor blade **102** of the tail rotor **100** between a positive pitch, a negative pitch, and a neutral pitch in accordance with the position of the accelerator pedal **182** and to vary the power supplied to the tail rotor **100** in accordance with the position of the accelerator pedal **182**. An adjustable throttle **185** controls the power plant **90** to maintain a constant RPM and power ratio in order to maintain flight or lift. If more power is needed, the throttle **185** is adjusted to increase the power output independently of the accelerator pedal **182**. The accelerator pedal **182** is also connected to the front rotor **40** via a mechanism **194** and to the rear rotor **60** via a mechanism **196**.

When the accelerator pedal is depressed, a tail rotor sprocket and a forward control sprocket **200** are actuated. This adds collective pitch to the tail rotor blades **102** causing forward thrust and causes the main rotors **40**, **60** to tilt forward causing forward thrust to push the vehicle **10** forward. When the brake pedal **172** is depressed, this reverses the action to neutral and if pressed further causes negative collective pitch to be applied to the tail rotor **100** and causes a reverse control sprocket **202** on the main rotors **40**, **60** to tilt the rotors backwards causing reverse thrust thus slowing the vehicle **10** and then flying in reverse.

One form of the vehicle **10** includes landing skids **300** mounted on the bottom **28** of the vehicle **10** as shown in FIG. 7. The landing gear **300** should be mounted at the same point as the main rotor assemblies and should be centered and balanced so as not to affect the in-flight aerodynamics. The landing gear **300** is constructed of a light weight but durable material to withstand the stress of landing and should be designed to deflect in order to absorb the shock encountered when landing.

It is understood that while certain forms of the present invention have been illustrated and described herein, it is not to be limited to the specific forms or arrangements of parts described and shown.

What is claimed and desired to be covered by Letters Patent is:

1. A motor vehicle comprising:

a) a main body that is in the shape of a land vehicle car and which has

- (1) a front end,
 - (2) a rear end,
 - (3) a longitudinal axis extending between the front end and the rear end,
 - (4) a first side,
 - (5) a second side,
 - (6) a transverse axis extending between the first side and the second side,
 - (7) a top,
 - (8) a bottom,
 - (9) a height dimension extending between the top and the bottom,
 - (10) a front vent area located near the front end of said main body, and
 - (11) a rear vent area located near the rear end of said main body;
- b) a front rotor mounted on said main body near the front end of said main body and oriented to rotate in a horizontal plane, said front rotor including at least one rotor blade that includes a longitudinal axis and is mounted to move in a roll motion about the longitudinal axis of the rotor blade of said front rotor;
- c) a rear rotor mounted on said main body near the rear end of said main body and oriented to rotate in a horizontal plane, said rear rotor including at least one rotor blade that includes a longitudinal axis and is mounted to move in a roll motion about the longitudinal axis of the rotor blade of said rear rotor;
- d) a power plant mounted on said main body between the front end of said main body and the rear end of said main body;
- e) a front rotor connection system coupling said power plant to said front rotor;
- f) a rear rotor connection system coupling said power plant to said rear rotor;
- g) a tail rotor mounted on the rear end of said main body and oriented to rotate in a vertical plane and to provide thrust propulsion to said main body in the direction of the longitudinal axis of said main body, said tail rotor having at least one rotor blade that includes a longitudinal axis and is mounted to rotate in a roll direction about the longitudinal axis of the rotor blade of said tail rotor to have a positive pitch, a negative pitch and a neutral pitch;
- h) a tail rotor connection system coupling said tail rotor to said power plant;
- i) a driver's seat mounted on said main body between said front rotor and said rear rotor;
- j) a passenger seat mounted on said main body adjacent to said driver's seat;
- k) a steering mechanism mounted on said main body and including
- (1) a compound steering wheel mounted on said main body adjacent to said driver's seat, said compound steering wheel including an outer steering wheel and an inner steering wheel, the outer steering wheel and the inner steering wheel being rotatable, and
 - (2) a steering connection connecting the steering wheel to said tail rotor and connecting said outer steering wheel to said front rotor and connecting said inner steering wheel to said rear rotor,
 - (3) the steering wheel being movably mounted on said main body to be movable in the direction of the longitudinal axis of said main body between a forward orientation and a rearward orientation;

7

- l) a brake mechanism mounted on said main body in front of said driver's seat and including
 - (1) a brake pedal located in front of said driver's seat, and
 - (2) a brake connection connecting the brake pedal to the rotor blade of said tail rotor to move the rotor blade of said tail rotor in accordance with the position of the brake pedal between the positive pitch position, the negative pitch position and the neutral pitch position of the rotor blade of said tail rotor;
- m) an accelerator mechanism mounted on said main body and including

8

- (1) an accelerator pedal mounted on said main body adjacent to said driver's seat, and
- (2) an accelerator mechanism connecting the accelerator pedal to the rotor blade of said tail rotor to vary the pitch of the rotor blade of said tail rotor between the positive pitch, the negative pitch and the neutral pitch in accordance with the position of the accelerator pedal, the accelerator pedal being further connected to said forward rotor and to said rear rotor.

* * * * *