



US007328674B2

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

(10) **Patent No.:** **US 7,328,674 B2**
(45) **Date of Patent:** **Feb. 12, 2008**

(54) **ROTARY VALVE SYSTEM AND ENGINE USING THE SAME**

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(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 29 days.

(21) Appl. No.: **11/457,104**

(22) Filed: **Jul. 12, 2006**

(Continued)

(65) **Prior Publication Data**

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US 2007/0151537 A1 Jul. 5, 2007

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Related U.S. Application Data

(57) **ABSTRACT**

(62) Division of application No. 11/372,978, filed on Mar. 9, 2006, now Pat. No. 7,255,082.

Rotary valve system for controlling communication with a port in an internal combustion engine which, in one disclosed embodiment, has a crankshaft, compression and expansion pistons connected to the crankshaft for reciprocating movement within compression and expansion chambers, a combustion chamber in which air from the compression chamber is combined with fuel and burned to produce an increased gas volume. The valve system has an outer valve member which is rotatively mounted in a bore and has an opening which moves into and out of communication with the port as the outer valve member rotates, an inner valve member rotatably mounted within the outer valve member with an opening at least partly overlapping the opening in the outer valve member, a flange extending along one edge of the opening in the inner valve member and through the opening in the outer valve member for sealing engagement with the wall of the bore, and means for effecting rotation of the valve members to change the degree of overlap between the openings and thereby control the timing and duration of communication between the openings and the port.

(60) Provisional application No. 60/760,642, filed on Jan. 20, 2006, provisional application No. 60/760,641, filed on Jan. 20, 2006, provisional application No. 60/760,478, filed on Jan. 20, 2006, provisional application No. 60/660,045, filed on Mar. 9, 2005, provisional application No. 60/660,046, filed on Mar. 9, 2005, provisional application No. 60/660,050, filed on Mar. 9, 2005.

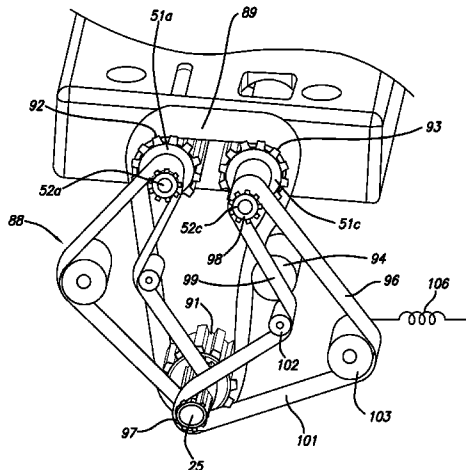
(51) **Int. Cl.**
F01L 1/34 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **123/90.15**; 123/80 C; 123/190.12; 123/190.2

(58) **Field of Classification Search** 123/80 R, 123/80 BA, 80 BB, 80 C, 90.15, 90.16, 90.17, 123/190.1, 190.12, 190.2

See application file for complete search history.

17 Claims, 5 Drawing Sheets



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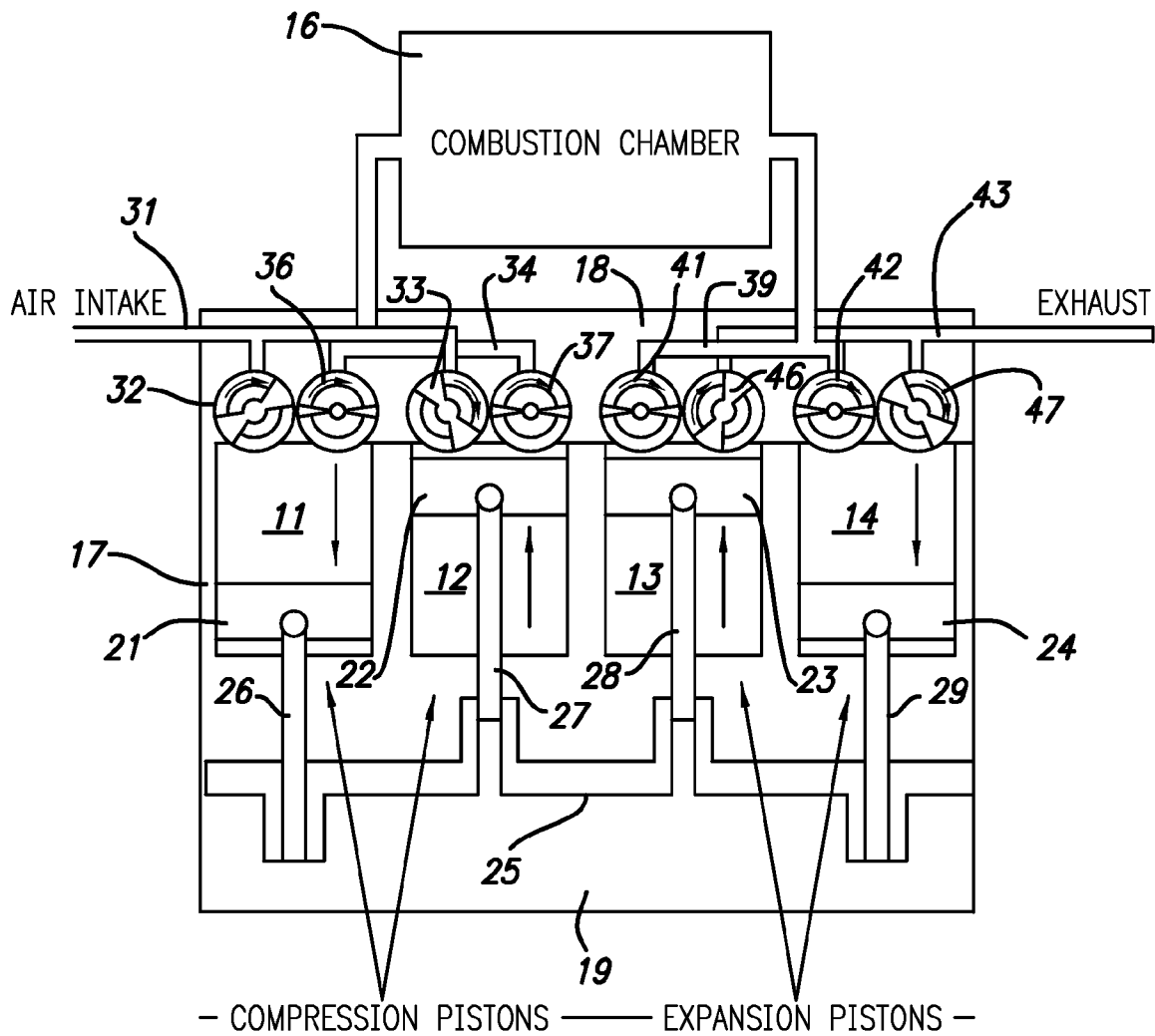


FIG. 1

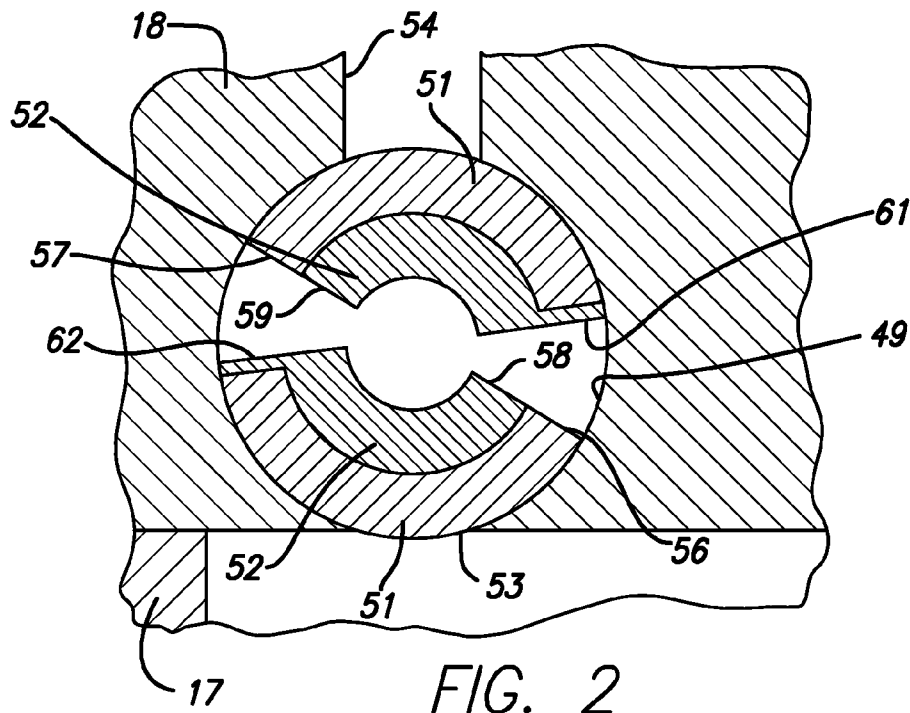


FIG. 2

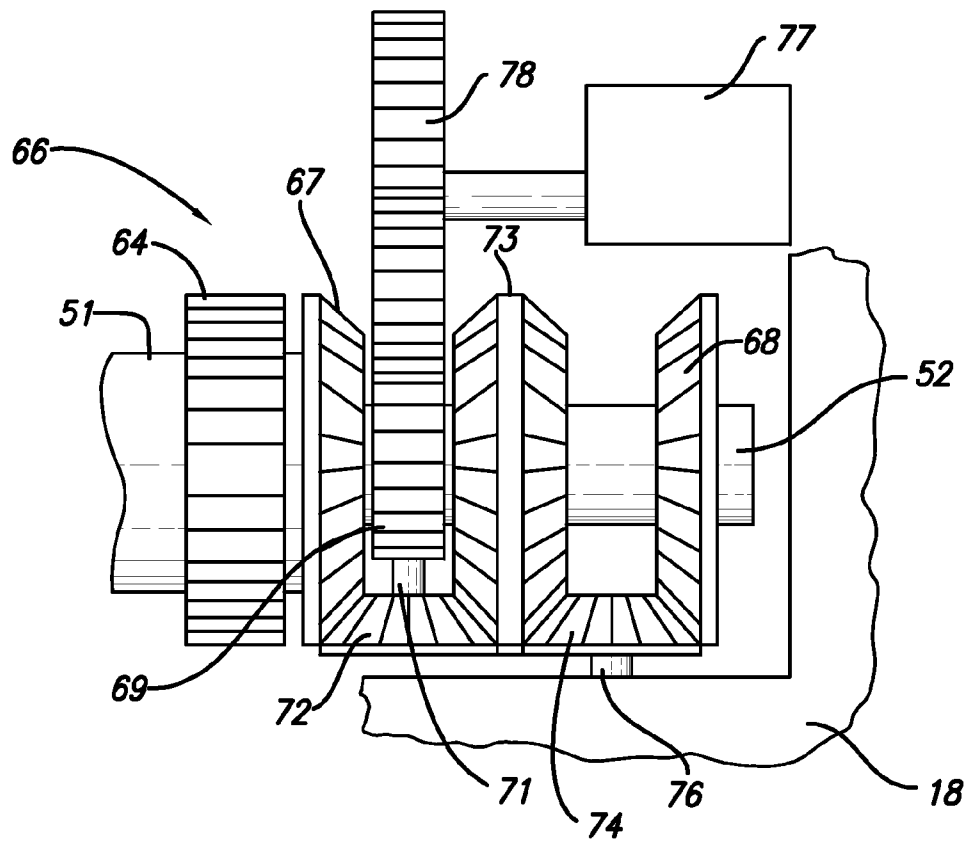
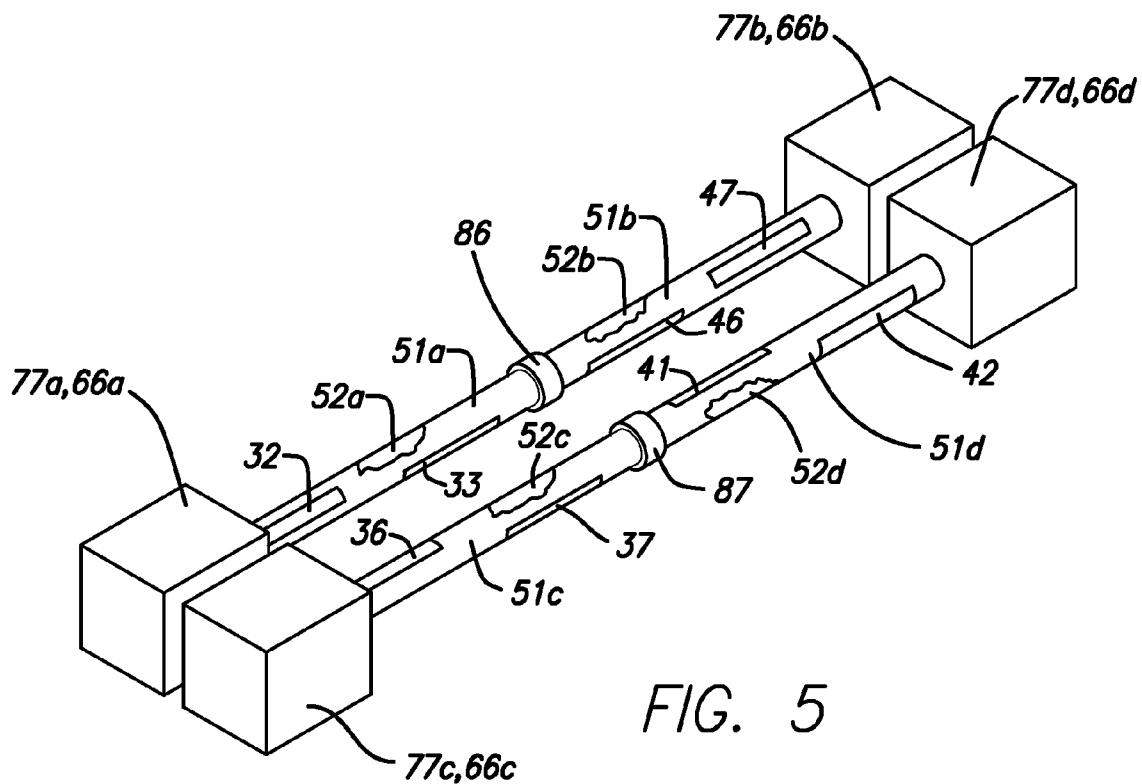
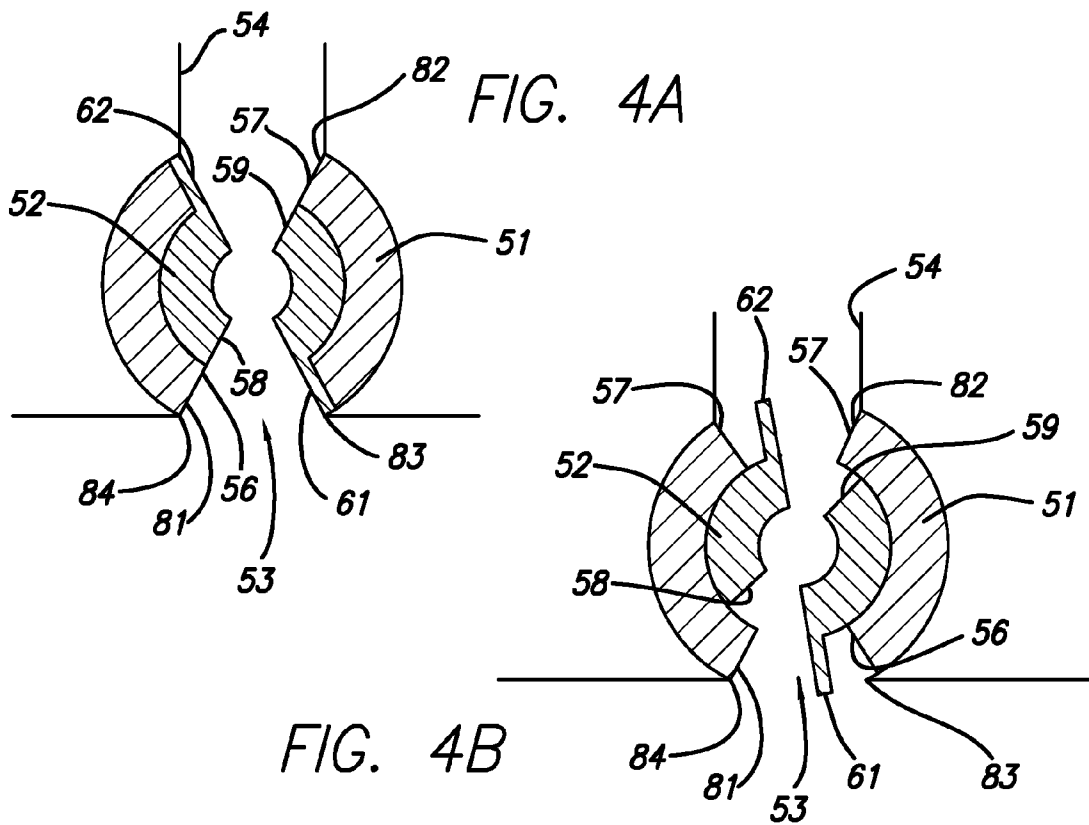


FIG. 3



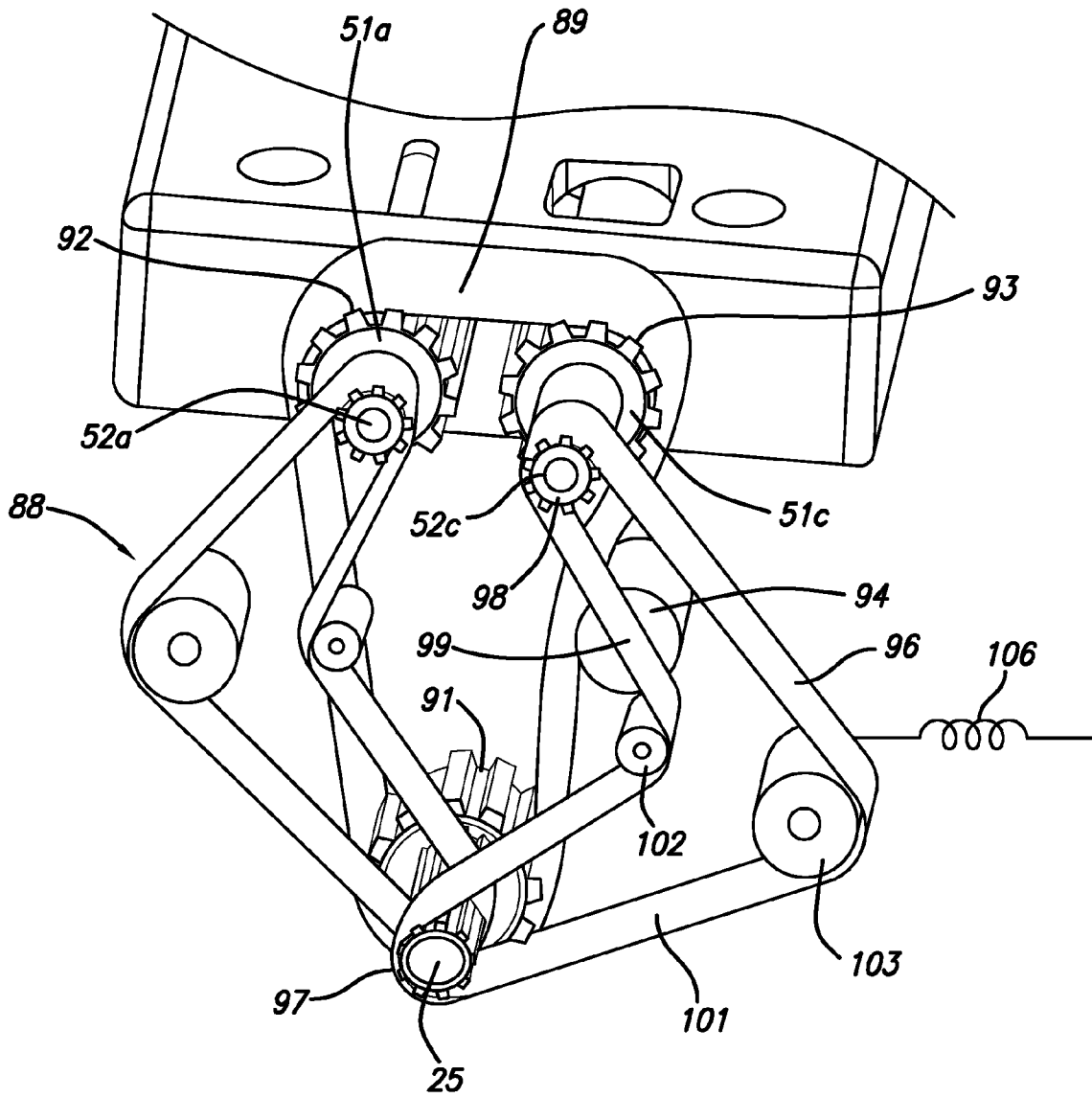


FIG. 6

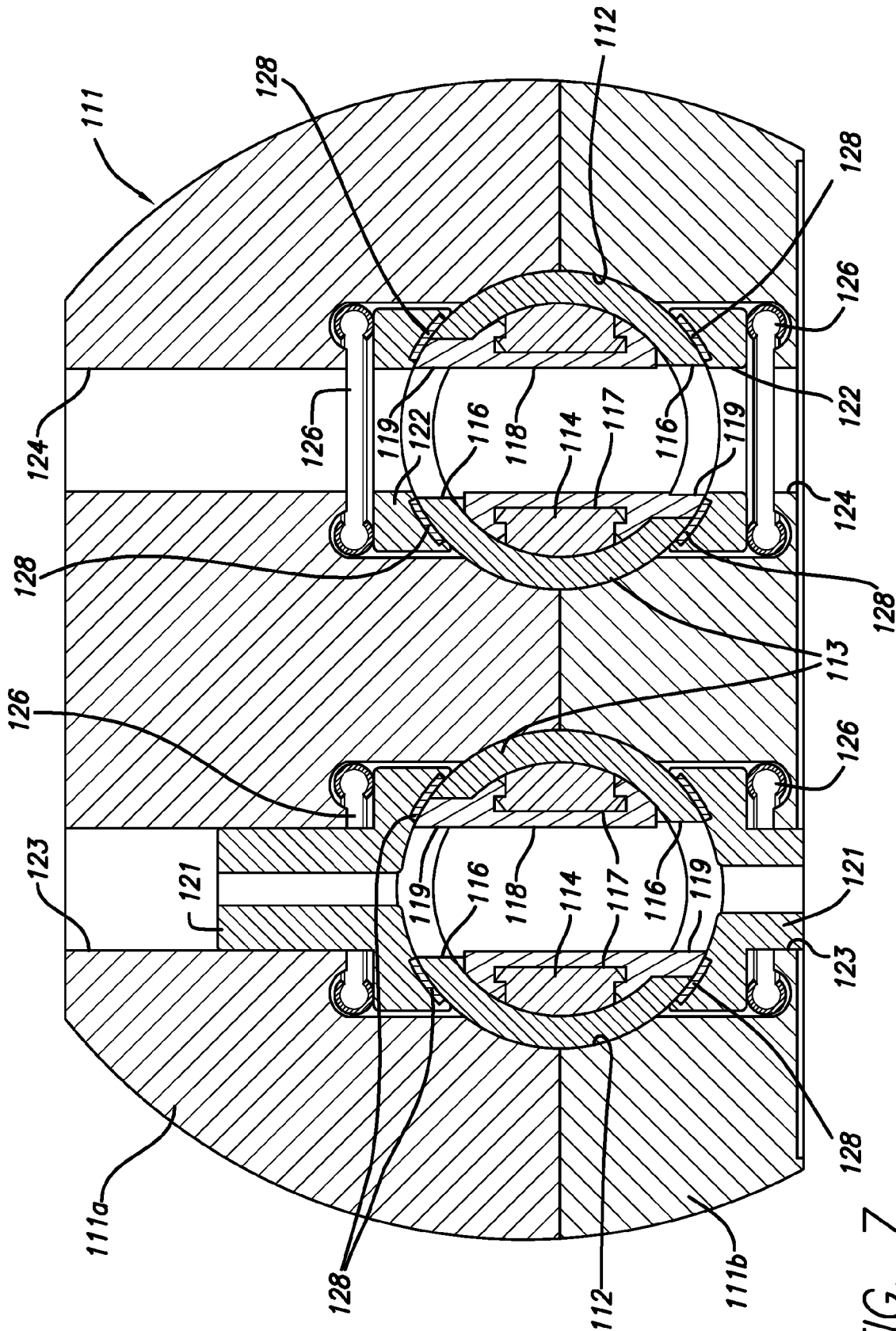


FIG. 7

ROTARY VALVE SYSTEM AND ENGINE USING THE SAME

RELATED APPLICATION

Division of Ser. No. 11/372,978, filed Mar. 9, 2006, now U.S. Pat. No. 7,255,082 which claimed the priority of: Provisional Application No. 60/660,045, filed Mar. 9, 2005; Provisional Application No. 60/660,046, filed Mar. 9, 2005; Provisional Application No. 60/660,050, filed Mar. 9, 2005; Provisional Application No. 60/760,478, filed Jan. 20, 2006; Provisional Application No. 60/760,641, filed Jan. 20, 2006; Provisional Application No. 60/760,642, filed Jan. 20, 2006.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of Invention

This invention pertains generally to internal combustion engines and, more particularly, to a rotary valve system and an internal combustion engine utilizing the same.

2. Related Art

Although widely used in automotive engines and other internal combustion engines, conventional poppet valves have a number of limitations and disadvantages. With the strong springs required to close them and hold them shut and the camshafts, rockerarms, and/or other mechanism required to open them, standard valve trains can require a significant portion of an engine's output to operate them.

Since poppet valves usually extend into the firing chambers when open, they can limit the minimum chamber volume and thus prevent an engine from having maximum volumetric efficiency, and measures must be taken to ensure that the valves do not collide with the pistons. Valve float can also be a problem, and if a valve ever does get sucked into a cylinder, it can destroy the engine. Poppet valves may require periodic adjustment, and typically have relatively large heads which can obstruct the flow of both the fuel mixture and the exhaust gases. In addition, it is very difficult to vary the valve timing with poppet valves.

Heretofore, there have been attempts to use rotary valves and electronically controlled valves instead of poppet valves in internal combustion engines. However, they also have had limitations and disadvantages which have limited their usefulness.

OBJECTS AND SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is in general an object of the invention to provide a new and improved rotary valve system and an internal combustion engine utilizing the same.

Another object of the invention is to provide a rotary valve system and engine of the above character which overcome limitations and disadvantages of valve systems and engines heretofore provided.

These and other objects are achieved in accordance with the invention by providing a rotary valve system for controlling communication with a port in an internal combustion engine. The valve system has a first rotary valve member with an opening which comes into registration with the port during part of each revolution of the valve member,

a second rotary valve member disposed concentrically of the first valve member and having an opening which at least partly overlaps with the opening in the first valve member, a flange extending from one of the valve members into the opening in the other valve member, and a control for adjusting the relative rotational positions of the valve members to change the degree of overlap between the openings and thereby control the timing and/or duration of communication between the openings and the port. In some embodiments, the first valve member is an outer sleeve which is rotatively mounted in a bore, and the second valve member, which can be either a solid body or a sleeve, is rotatively mounted in the outer sleeve, with the flange extending through the opening in the outer sleeve and into sealing engagement with the wall of the bore.

In an embodiment for controlling communication between ports in two chambers of an internal combustion engine, the first valve member has first and second openings that move into and out of communication with the two ports, the second valve member has first and second openings which at least partly overlap with respective ones of the first and second openings in the first valve member, and the control adjusts the relative rotational positions of the valve members to change the degree of overlap between the openings and thereby control the timing and duration of communication between the two chambers.

The valves are typically driven from the crankshaft or other output shaft of the engine, with the opening in the first valve member defining a variable window in which valve can be open. The relative rotational positions of the two valve members are adjusted to control the overlap of the openings and, hence, when the valve opens or closes and how long it remains open. In some embodiments, the timing of the first valve member is fixed relative to the position of the crankshaft and/or a piston, and the position of the second valve member is adjusted to vary the valve timing.

In one disclosed embodiment, the valve system is shown in conjunction with an engine having compression and expansion chambers, a separate combustion chamber in which air from the compression chamber is combined with fuel and burned to produce an increased gas volume, an intake valve for controlling air flow to the compression chamber, and outlet valve for controlling air flow from the compression chamber to the combustion chamber, an inlet valve for controlling communication between the combustion chamber and the expansion chamber, and an exhaust valve for controlling exhaust gas flow from the expansion chamber. In that particular embodiment, all four of the valves incorporate the invention. The valve system is not, however, limited to engines of that type, and it can also be used in conventional internal combustion engines, including engines in which combustion takes place in the same cylinders or chambers as compression and expansion.

Increased flow for low pressure gases can be provided by making the openings in valves where pressure is lower wider than the openings in valves where pressure is higher. Thus, in the embodiment discussed above, the intake valve has wider openings for allowing gas that is at or near atmospheric pressure to enter the compression chamber from an intake manifold, and the outlet valve has narrower openings for allowing high pressure gas to flow to the combustion chamber. Similarly, the inlet valve has narrower openings for allowing high pressure gas to enter the expansion chamber from the combustion chamber, and the exhaust valve has wider openings for allowing gas that is at or near atmospheric pressure to be exhausted from the expansion chambers.

In embodiments where the engine has a plurality of compression and/or expansion chambers, the valve members can be ganged together, with a single valve member serving more than one chamber. Thus, for example, in an engine having a plurality of compression chambers, a common outer sleeve with openings in different positions to provide the outlet valve for each of them, with independently adjustable valve members within the sleeves for varying the timing and duration of each of the valves. Common valve members can also be used for different types of chambers, such as a compression chamber and an expansion chamber.

In some disclosed embodiments, relative rotation between the valve members is effected by a gear system which, in one embodiment, includes a first drive gear affixed to one of the inner valve member, a second drive gear affixed to the outer valve member, and a variable gear train interconnecting the drive gears for rotation in unison while permitting the drive gears to be advanced and retarded relative to each other.

In other disclosed embodiments, relative rotation between the valve members is effected by an endless drive element, such as a toothed belt or a chain, trained about a drive wheel and a wheel connected to one of the valve members with runs of the drive element between the wheels on opposite sides of the wheel connected to the one valve member, and means for differentially varying the relative lengths of the runs to advance and retard the one valve member relative to the drive wheel.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a vertical sectional view, somewhat schematic, of one embodiment of an internal combustion engine with a rotary valve system incorporating the invention.

FIG. 2 is an enlarged cross-sectional view of one of the valve assemblies in the embodiment of FIG. 1.

FIG. 3 is a plan view of one embodiment of a gear driven system for adjusting the timing and duration of the valve openings in the embodiment of FIG. 1.

FIGS. 4A and 4B are cross-sectional views similar to FIG. 2, showing the valve members in different operative positions.

FIG. 5 is an isometric view, partly broken away, of the valve assembly in the embodiment of FIG. 1.

FIG. 6 is an isometric view of one embodiment of a belt driven system for adjusting the timing and duration of the valve openings in the embodiment of FIG. 1.

FIG. 7 is an enlarged fragmentary cross-sectional view of the cylinder head of an engine similar to the embodiment of FIG. 1, illustrating the manner in which the valve members are sealed.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

In the drawings, the invention is illustrated in conjunction with a four cylinder internal combustion engine which is described in greater detail in copending application Ser. No. 11/372,751, filed Mar. 9, 2006, the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference. That engine has a pair of compression cylinders 11, 12 and a pair of expansion cylinders 13, 14 connected to opposite ends of a combustion chamber 16 which can, for example, be of a type disclosed in copending application Ser. No. 11/372,737, filed Mar. 9, 2006, filed of even date, the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference. The cylinders are formed in an engine block 17, with the upper ends of the cylinders being

closed by a cylinder head 18 and the lower ends of the cylinders opening into a crankcase 19 in the lower portion of the engine block.

Reciprocating pistons 21-24 are mounted in the cylinders and connected to a crankshaft 25 by connecting rods 26-29, with pistons 21, 22 serving as compression pistons in cylinders 11, 12 and pistons 23, 24 serving as expansion pistons in cylinders 13, 14. For good balance, the two outer pistons (compression piston 21 and expansion piston 24) move up and down together, as do the two inner pistons (compression piston 22 and expansion piston 23), with the two groups being substantially 180 degrees out of phase with each other.

Although a four cylinder engine is shown, the valves will work with any number of cylinders in any internal combustion engine, and they can also be used in other valving applications, such as steam engines, where variable valve timing is desired.

Compression cylinders 11, 12 receive fresh air through an intake manifold 31, with intake valves 32, 33 controlling communication between the manifold and the cylinders. Cylinders 11, 12 also communicate with the inlet end of combustion chamber 16 via a manifold 34, with communication between the cylinders and that manifold being controlled outlet valves 36, 37. The outlet end of combustion chamber 16 communicates with expansion cylinders 13, 14 via a manifold 39, with inlet valves 41, 42 controlling communication between the chamber and those cylinders. Exhaust gases are expelled from the expansion cylinders through an exhaust manifold 43, with communication between the cylinders and the manifold being controlled by exhaust valves 46, 47.

Air is drawn into the compression chambers on the downstroke of pistons 21, 22, then compressed and thereby heated on the upstroke of the pistons and injected into the inlet end of combustion chamber 16. In the combustion chamber, the hot, compressed air mixes with fuel introduced into the chamber through a fuel inlet to form a mixture which burns and produces a volumetric increase throughout the chamber. The expanding gases leaving the combustion chamber drive pistons 23, 24 in a downward direction in the expansion cylinders, and spent gases are expelled through exhaust manifold 43 on the upstroke of those pistons.

In one presently preferred embodiment, the sizing of the compression and expansion cylinders, the movement of the pistons within the cylinders, and the timing of the valves are such that the pressure within the combustion chamber remains substantially constant throughout the operating cycle of the engine, although some pressure spiking can occur and may even be desirable in some cases.

As best seen in FIG. 2, each of the valves has an outer sleeve 51 which is rotatively mounted in a bore 49 in cylinder head 18 and an inner valve member 52 which is rotatively mounted in the outer sleeve. In the embodiment illustrated, the inner valve member is also a sleeve, but it could be a solid body, if desired. The bore opens through the lower side of the head to form a port 53 in communication with the cylinder below, a manifold passageway 54 communicates with the bore on the side opposite the port.

The outer sleeve has a pair of diametrically opposed slotted openings 56, 57 which move into and out of registration with port 53 and passageway 54 as the sleeve rotates. Inner valve member 52 also has a pair of diametrically opposed slotted openings 58, 59, with a radial lip or flange 61, 62 extending along one edge of each of the openings in

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the inner member and through one of the openings in the outer sleeve for sealing engagement with the wall of the bore.

The openings in outer sleeve 51 define a window during which the valve can be open. This window corresponds to the period of time during which one of the openings in the outer sleeve is aligned with the port 53 and the other is aligned with the manifold passageway 54. The valve is actually open only when the openings in inner valve member 52 also align with port 53 and manifold passageway 54. The position of the inner valve member 52 relative to the outer sleeve 51 is varied to control when the valve opens or closes and how long it remains open during the window.

In some applications, it may be desirable to have the openings offset radially from each other, rather than being aligned diametrically. Offsetting the openings will limit the flow through them to some extent but will permit the valves to remain open for a longer time than when the openings are aligned.

It may also be desirable in some applications to make lip seals 61, 62 in a way such that the valve is not completely closed in its most closed position. That can be done, for example, by forming grooves in the sealing surfaces or by putting stops on the seals to prevent the valve from closing fully. This can be useful during very low load conditions such as compression release engine braking, commonly known as "Jake braking", where it can be beneficial to have a small amount of air enter the combustion chamber and burn. This will keep the combustion chamber hot and ready for use even after long periods of very low load conditions. In addition, the small flow of air may help avoid overpressure conditions in the event of a control failure.

In the embodiment illustrated in FIG. 1, the side walls of the slotted openings lie in radial planes, and the openings in the valves where pressure is lower are shown as being wider than the openings in the valves where pressure is higher. Thus, in this example, the intake valves have wider openings for allowing gas that is at or near atmospheric pressure to enter the compression chambers from an intake manifold, the outlet valves have narrower openings for allowing high pressure gas to flow to the combustion chamber. Similarly, the inlet valves have narrower openings for allowing high pressure gas to enter the expansion chambers from the combustion chamber and wider openings for allowing gas that is at or near atmospheric pressure to be exhausted from the expansion chambers.

The outer sleeve is driven from the crankshaft by suitable means such as gears, belts or chains, and means is provided for rotating the inner valve member relative to the outer sleeve to change the degree of overlap between the openings and thereby control the timing and duration of communication between the openings and the port.

In the embodiment shown in FIG. 3, a drive gear 64 is mounted on outer sleeve 51 and driven from the crankshaft through a gear train (not shown) which, in this example, provides a 2:1 reduction in speed between the crankshaft and the valve so that the valve makes one revolution for each two revolutions of the crankshaft. During one revolution of the crankshaft, openings 56, 58 are aligned with port 53 and openings 57, 59 are aligned with passageway 54, and during the next revolution, openings 57, 59 are aligned with the port and openings 56, 58 are aligned with the passageway.

A variable gear train 66 interconnects the two valve members for rotation in unison while permitting inner sleeve 52 to be advanced and retracted relative to outer sleeve 51. This train includes drive gears 67, 68 which are affixed to respective ones of the two sleeves, and a timing gear 69

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which is mounted on inner sleeve between the drive gears and is free to rotate about that sleeve. An axle 71 extends in a radial direction from timing gear 69 and carries a planetary gear 72 which meshes with drive gear 67 on outer sleeve 51 and with an idler gear 73 which is rotatively mounted on inner sleeve. Idler gear 73 is a double bevel gear and is coupled to drive gear 68 by another idler gear 74 which rotates about a radially extending axle 76 mounted on cylinder head 18. Timing gear 69 is driven by a stepping motor 77 and a drive gear 78 on the motor shaft.

As outer sleeve 51 is driven by the crankshaft, inner sleeve 52 rotates in unison with it as long as timing gear 69 remains stationary, with the rotation being coupled from drive gear 67 to drive gear 68 by planetary gear 72 and idler gears 73, 74. In that regard, it will be noted that planetary gear 72 drives idler gear 73 at the same speed as drive gear 67, but in the opposite direction, and that idler gear 74 reverses the direction again so that drive gear 68 turns at the same speed and in the same direction as drive gear 67.

When timing gear 69 is rotated by positioning motor 77, axle 71 and the planetary gear carried by it precess about the axis of the sleeves. As the planetary gear moves relative to drive gear 67, it turns about its axis, and that rotation is imparted to idler gear 73 to advance or retard that gear relative to drive gear 67. That movement is reversed and transferred to drive gear 68 and, hence, to inner sleeve 52 by idler gear 74.

By advancing and retarding the position of inner sleeve 52 relative to outer sleeve 51, the timing and duration of the valve opening can be controlled. Thus, in FIG. 4A, the sleeves are shown with openings 58, 59 fully aligned with or overlapping openings 56, 57, which maximizes the duration of the valve opening. With the sleeves in this position, lips or flanges 61, 62 extending along the trailing edges of openings 58, 59, and the sleeves rotating in a clockwise direction, the valve opens when the leading edges 81, 82 of openings 56, 57 reach the near edge 83 of port 53 and close when flanges 61, 62 reach the far edge 84 of the port.

When inner sleeve 52 is advanced relative to outer sleeve 51, as illustrated in FIG. 4B, the valve still opens when the leading edges of openings 56, 57 reach the near edge of the port and closes when flanges 61, 62 reach the far edge. However, the flanges will reach the far edge at an earlier point in the rotation of the outer sleeve, so the valve remains open for a shorter period of time and closes sooner.

If the flanges or lips are positioned along the leading edges of openings 58, 59, rather than the trailing edges and the valve still rotates in the same direction, then the valve will open when the flanges reach the near edge of the port and close when the trailing edges of openings 56, 57 reach the far edge. In that case, the opening point is adjustable and the closing point is fixed.

If desired, a similar system can also be utilized to advance and retard the outer sleeves relative to the crankshaft to provide independently variable opening times and closing times for the valves. This provides an unprecedented level of control for a wide range of engine loads and conditions.

FIG. 1 is schematic in that for purposes of illustrating the two valves in each cylinder and their positions relative to the pistons, the valves are shown as extending crosswise of the engine, whereas in that particular embodiment they actually extend in a lengthwise direction as shown in FIG. 5.

Thus, in the four cylinder engine of FIG. 1, the valves are aligned along two parallel axes which extend side-by-side above the cylinders, with four valves along each and the number of valves being dependent on the number of cylinders. In the embodiment illustrated, each outer sleeve and

each inner sleeve serves two valves, with the two outer sleeves on each side being connected together at their inner ends for rotation in unison. The inner sleeves rotate independently of each other, but are coupled at their outer ends to the outer sleeves in the manner described above, with a separate positioning motor for each. Each pair of intake, outlet, inlet, and exhaust valves has an independent drive mechanism to allow independent control of each type of valve.

As shown in FIG. 5, outer sleeves **51a** and **51b** are connected together at their inner ends by a coupling **86**, with positioning motors **77a**, **77b** and gear trains **66a**, **66b** for adjusting the relative positions of the inner sleeves. Likewise, outer sleeves **51c**, **51d** are connected together at their inner ends by a coupling **87**, with positioning motors **77c**, **77d** and gear trains **66c**, **66d** for adjusting the relative positions of the sleeves in them. In this embodiment, the air intake valves **32**, **33** for compression cylinders **11**, **12** are formed by outer sleeve **51a** and inner sleeve **52a**, the outlet valves **36**, **37** for compression cylinders **11**, **12** are formed by outer sleeve **51c** and inner sleeve **52c**, the inlet valves **41**, **42** for expansion cylinders **13**, **14** are formed by outer sleeve **51d** and inner sleeve **52d**, and the exhaust valves **46**, **47** for expansion cylinders **13**, **14** are formed by outer sleeve **51b** and inner sleeve **52b**.

In the embodiment of FIG. 6, the valve system is driven from the crankshaft of the engine by means of a belt or chain system **88** which permits the inner valve members to be advanced and retarded relative to the outer sleeves. The valve system and engine are similar those in the embodiment of FIG. 5, but without the gear trains and positioning motors for controlling the valve timing. The drive system is shown for the valves at one end of the engine only, it being understood that a similar system is also provided for the valves at the other end.

Outer sleeves **51a**, **51c** are driven by an endless drive element in the form of a toothed drive belt or chain **89** which is trained about a cog wheel or sprocket **91** on crankshaft **25** and about cog wheels or sprocket **92**, **93** on the outer sleeves, with an idler wheel or sprocket **94** for maintaining proper tension in the belt.

Each of the inner valve members **52a**, **52c** is driven by an endless drive element such as a toothed drive belt or chain **96** which is trained about cog wheels or sprockets **97**, **98** on the crankshaft and valve member, with means for differentially adjusting the relative lengths of the runs of the belt or chain **99**, **101** between the cog wheels or sprockets. In the embodiment illustrated, this means comprises a pair of idler wheels or sprockets **102**, **103** which can be moved back and forth in a direction generally perpendicular to the runs. By simultaneously moving idler wheel or sprocket **102** to the left and idler wheel or sprocket **103** to the right, the length of run **99** is decreased and the length of run **101** is increased. With drive pulleys or sprockets **91** and **97** locked together on the crankshaft, the shift in the belt or chain causes cog wheel or sprocket **98** and inner valve member **52c** to advance in a clockwise direction relative to outer sleeve **51c**. The inner valve member **52c** can be shifted in a counter-clockwise direction, or retarded, by moving idler wheel or sprocket **102** to the right and idler wheel or sprocket **103** to the left, which increases the length of run **99** and decreases length of run **101**.

If one of the idler wheels or sprockets is spring-loaded toward its extended position (i.e., the position which increases the length of the run trained about it), it is only necessary to adjust the position of the other idler wheel or sprocket in order to adjust the valve timing. Thus, for

example, with idler wheel or sprocket **103** biased toward its extended position, as illustrated schematically by spring **106**, valve member **52c** can be advanced simply by moving idler wheel or sprocket **102** to the left and retarded by moving idler wheel or sprocket **102** to the right. As idler wheel or sprocket **102** moves to the left, the spring moves idler wheel or sprocket **103** to the right, thereby increasing the length of run **101** relative to run **99**. When idler wheel or sprocket **102** moves to the right and increases the length of run **99**, the spring allows idler wheel or sprocket **103** to move to the left with a corresponding decrease in the length of run **101**.

If desired, a similar system of idler wheels or sprockets can be utilized to change the relative lengths of the belt **89** which is trained about the cog wheels or sprockets **92**, **93** affixed to the outer valve members or sleeves **51a**, **51c** to provide independently variable opening times and closing times for the valves.

The timing of the valves can be controlled by a control system such as that disclosed in Ser. No. 11/372,751, filed Mar. 9, 2006, the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference. Such a system has sensors for monitoring temperature and pressure in the chambers and in other parts of the engine and a computer or other controller for controlling actuators that move the idler wheels or sprockets to adjust the timing of the valves in accordance with temperature, pressure, load and other operating conditions.

In the embodiment of FIG. 7, cylinder head **111** is split horizontally into two sections **111a** and **111b**, with circular valve bores **112** formed partially in each of the two sections. Outer valve sleeves **113** are rotatively mounted in the bores and inner valve members **114** are rotatively mounted within the sleeves. The sleeves have slotted openings **116** on opposite sides thereof, and the valve members have generally cylindrical bodies with openings **117** extending through the bodies. Inserts **118** are mounted in openings **117** and provide seals between the valve members and sleeves. The inserts also extend through the slotted openings in the sleeves to form lips or flanges **119** which extend through the openings in the outer sleeves and form seal with the bores.

Bores **112** are formed in part by inserts **121**, **122** which are mounted in vertically extending bores **123**, **124** that intersect the valve bores and form ports for the valves. Bores **123**, **124** are stepped, and the inserts are mounted in enlarged sections of the bores above and below the valve sleeves, with C-ring seals **126** between the inserts and the shoulders of the bores in which they are mounted. With their C-shaped cross section, seals **126** are flexible enough to provide a spring force which holds the inserts and sleeves together and also provide compensation for thermal expansion and wearing of the parts. Seals **128** provide sealing between the inserts and the sleeves. The inserts can be fabricated of a ceramic material or any other suitable material.

The lower portions of bores **123**, **124** communicate directly with the cylinder (not shown) beneath the valves, and the upper portions of the bores communicate with the manifolds.

The inserts and seals are installed along with the valves while the two sections of the head are apart, and they are retained in place by the head when it is assembled. As in the embodiment of FIG. 1, valve sleeves **113** are free to rotate within bores **112**, with the positions of valve members **114** being adjustable relative to sleeves **113** to vary the timing and duration of the valve openings.

Since the valves do not extend into the cylinders when they open, they do not prevent the pistons from traveling all the way to the tops of the cylinders like poppet valves do,

even when they are open. Hence, the only limitation to full piston travel is the need for a small tolerance or clearance to prevent the pistons from striking the head due to thermal expansion or extension at higher engine speeds. This clearance can, for example, be on the order of about 0.010 inch to 0.200 inch, and typically does not need to be more than about 0.015 inch. Hence, the minimum volumes of the cylinders can be much closer to zero than they are in other engines.

Although a rotary valve has the ability to open when the piston is at top dead center (TDC) and close when the piston is at bottom dead center (BDC), that may not be the best way to operate the valves in a given engine since it can result in compressed gases being blown out through the intake and/or exhaust manifolds. In an engine of the type shown in FIG. 1, for example, opening the intake valve at top dead center would allow compressed air to escape, thereby wasting the work done in compressing it and compromising the efficiency of the engine.

It is, therefore, preferable to retard the opening of the intake valve until the air in the cylinder has expanded enough to be at or near atmospheric pressure. In this way, the work done to compress the gas is recovered as the gas pushes against the piston at the top of its downstroke.

For example, an engine with a 12.5:1 compression ratio and a 3.76" stroke may have a 0.015" clearance between the crown of the piston and the cylinder head. If the intake valve were opened at TDC, gas at a pressure of 504 p.s.i. would escape and be wasted. If, however, the opening of the intake valve is delayed until the piston has moved down to the point where the gas has expanded to 12.5 times the volume at TDC, then the pressure of the gas above the piston would be at or near atmospheric, no gas would be lost out the intake valve, and the engine would still have the same amount of air in the cylinder at BDC even with the delayed opening of the intake valve.

In the foregoing example, the volume of the gas has expanded to 12.5 times the TDC volume when the piston has traveled 11.5×0.015 ", or 0.173", which is 4.6 percent of the 3.76" stroke and 21.5 degrees of crankshaft rotation. With this delayed opening, the slotted openings 56, 57 in the intake valves can be substantially narrower, with the leading edges of the openings being moved back.

The invention has a number of important features and advantages. Prior attempts at building rotary valves with an adjustable inner member within an outer sleeve were not successful because of leakage between the inner member and the outer sleeve. The invention overcomes that problem with the sealing lip or flange which extends from the inside of the inner member to the outside of the sleeve, thereby preventing leakage between the two members. This provides a truly variable valve opening or closing without major leaks.

Either the opening positions or the closing positions of the valves can be adjusted, depending upon which side of the openings the sealing flanges or lips are on, and the opening or closing positions can be adjusted by as much as 180 degrees. Thus, the opening positions can be adjusted without affecting the closing positions, or the closing positions can be adjusted without affecting the opening positions. All of the valves can be adjusted independently and while the engine is running. The full adjustability of the valve system permits constant matching of engine performance over a wide range of engine load and speed.

Since the inner member and the outer sleeve rotate together except when the load and speed of the engine change, there is very little wear between the parts. With less

wear, the valves can use dry lubrication rather than liquid lubrication, thereby avoiding the problem of oil leaking into cylinders and fouling plugs and/or building up carbon deposits. Without oil, the parts can run hotter, which reduces heat loss and improves efficiency. It also reduces oil burning and eliminates pollution due to the burning of oil in the valve system.

Since there are no springs, the valves cannot float, and engine speed and power are not compromised at higher RPM as they are with conventional valves. Eliminating the springs also reduces the power necessary to run the valve train, which further increases the available horsepower and efficiency of the engine. Moreover, the rotary valves allow the engine to operate at higher RPM than one with reciprocating valves.

The rotary valves of the invention are not constrained by the space limitations of round poppet valves and can have large, rectangular ports which provide significantly greater flow and also improve engine efficiency. It is also beneficial not to have to force gases around the mushroom shaped heads of poppet valves.

Since the valves do not extend into the cylinders, they do not prevent the pistons from traveling all the way to the tops of the cylinders like poppet valves do, and there is no danger of the valves colliding with the pistons in the event of a mechanical malfunction. This permits full utilization of the cylinder volume and provides both high volumetric efficiency and high engine efficiency.

Although the invention has been disclosed with specific reference to an engine having a separate chamber in which combustion occurs, the valve system can also be utilized advantageously in internal combustion engines where combustion takes place in the same chambers as compression and expansion. In addition to being adjustable, the system has fewer moving parts than a poppet valve system, and the rotary valves take less work to operate than poppet valves. The system requires less space than a poppet valve system. The valves can open and close faster than poppet valves and can also operate at higher engine speeds, or RPM. Moreover, there is no danger of valve float, and engine breathing is better than with conventional valve systems. Hence, the system will improve the fuel efficiency of and reduce pollution from such engines.

It is apparent from the foregoing that a new and improved rotary valve system and an engine utilizing the same have been provided. While only certain presently preferred embodiments have been described in detail, as will be apparent to those familiar with the art, certain changes and modifications can be made without departing from the scope of the invention as defined by the following claims.

The invention claimed is:

1. A rotary valve system for controlling communication with a port in an internal combustion engine, comprising: an outer valve member which is rotatively mounted in a bore and has an opening which moves into and out of communication with the port as the outer valve member rotates, an inner valve member rotatably mounted within the outer valve member with an opening at least partly overlapping the opening in the outer valve member, an endless drive element trained about a drive wheel and a wheel connected to one of the valve members with runs of the drive element between the wheels on opposite sides of the wheel connected to the one valve member, and means for differentially varying the relative lengths of the runs to advance and retard the one valve member relative to the drive wheel to change

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the degree of overlap between the openings and thereby control the timing and duration of communication between the openings and the port.

2. The rotary valve system of claim 1 wherein the drive element is a toothed belt.

3. An internal combustion engine having compression and expansion pistons constrained for reciprocating movement within compression and expansion chambers, a combustion chamber in which air from the compression chamber is combined with fuel and burned to produce an increased gas volume, an intake valve for controlling airflow to the compression chamber, and outlet valve for controlling air flow from the compression chamber to the combustion chamber, an inlet valve for controlling communication between the combustion chamber and the expansion chamber, and an exhaust valve for controlling exhaust gas flow from the expansion chamber, at least one of the valves comprising an outer valve member which is rotatively mounted in a bore and has an opening which moves into and out of communication with the chamber as the outer valve member rotates, an inner valve member rotatably mounted within the outer valve member with an opening at least partly overlapping the opening in the outer valve member, an endless drive element trained about a drive wheel and a wheel connected to one of the valve members with runs of the drive element between the wheels on opposite sides of the wheel connected to the one valve member, and means for differentially varying the relative lengths of the runs to advance and retard the one valve member relative to the drive wheel to change the degree of overlap between the openings and thereby control the timing and duration of communication between the openings and the port.

4. The internal combustion engine of claim 3 wherein the drive element is a toothed belt.

5. The internal combustion engine of claim 3 wherein the drive element is a chain.

6. The internal combustion engine of claim 3 wherein the compression and expansion pistons are connected to a crankshaft, and the drive wheel is also connected to the crankshaft.

7. An internal combustion engine having a cylinder, crankshaft, a piston connected to the crankshaft for reciprocating movement within the cylinder, an outer valve member rotatively mounted in a bore with an opening which moves into and out of communication the cylinder as the outer valve member rotates, an inner valve member rotatably mounted within the outer valve member with an opening at least partly overlapping the opening in the outer valve member, an endless drive element trained about a drive wheel and a wheel connected to one of the valve members with runs of the drive element between the wheels on opposite sides of the wheel connected to the one valve member, and means for differentially varying the relative lengths of the runs to advance and retard the one valve member relative to the drive wheel to change the degree of overlap between the openings and thereby control the timing and duration of communication between the openings and the port.

8. The internal combustion engine of claim 7 wherein the drive element is a toothed belt.

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9. The internal combustion engine of claim 7 wherein the drive element is a chain.

10. An internal combustion engine having a chamber of variable volume, an outer valve member which is rotatively mounted in a bore and has an opening which moves into and out of communication with the chamber as the outer valve member rotates, an inner valve member rotatably mounted within the outer valve member with an opening at least partly overlapping the opening in the outer valve member, an endless drive element trained about a drive wheel and a wheel connected to one of the valve members with runs of the drive element between the wheels on opposite sides of the wheel connected to the one valve member, and means for differentially varying the relative lengths of the runs to advance and retard the one valve member relative to the drive wheel to change the degree of overlap between the openings and thereby control the timing and duration of communication between the openings and the port.

11. The internal combustion engine of claim 10 wherein the drive element is a toothed belt.

12. The internal combustion engine of claim 10 wherein the drive element is a chain.

13. A rotary valve system for controlling communication with a port in an internal combustion engine, comprising: an outer valve member comprising a sleeve which is rotatively mounted in a bore and has an opening which moves into and out of communication with the port as the sleeve rotates, an inner valve member rotatably mounted within the outer sleeve with an opening at least partly overlapping the opening in the outer sleeve, a flange extending along one edge of the opening in the inner valve member and through the opening in the outer sleeve for sealing engagement with the wall of the bore, a drive shaft connected to a first one of the valve members for rotating the same, a drive wheel connected to the drive shaft, an endless drive element trained about the drive wheel and a wheel connected to a second one of the valve members with runs of the drive element between the wheels on opposite sides of the wheel connected to the valve member, and means for differentially varying the relative lengths of the runs to advance and retard the second valve member relative to the first.

14. The rotary valve system of claim 13 wherein the means for differentially varying the lengths of the runs comprises idler wheels which engage the drive element between the drive wheel and the wheel connected to the second valve member and are adapted for movement in concert for simultaneously increasing the length of one of the runs and decreasing the length of the other.

15. The rotary valve system of claim 13 wherein the drive element is a toothed belt, and the drive wheel and the wheel connected to the second valve member are cog wheels.

16. The rotary valve system of claim 13 wherein the drive element is a chain, and the drive wheel and the wheel connected to the second valve member are sprockets.

17. The rotary valve system of claim 13 wherein the drive shaft is connected to the outer sleeve, and the wheel connected to the second valve member is connected to the inner valve member.

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