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(54) **LUBRICATION PUMP FOR A SWASH PLATE TYPE COMPRESSOR**

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(52) **U.S. Cl.** **417/199.1**; 417/269; 417/222.2; 184/6.17

(58) **Field of Search** 417/269, 222.2, 417/199.1; 184/6.17, 6.16, 6.28

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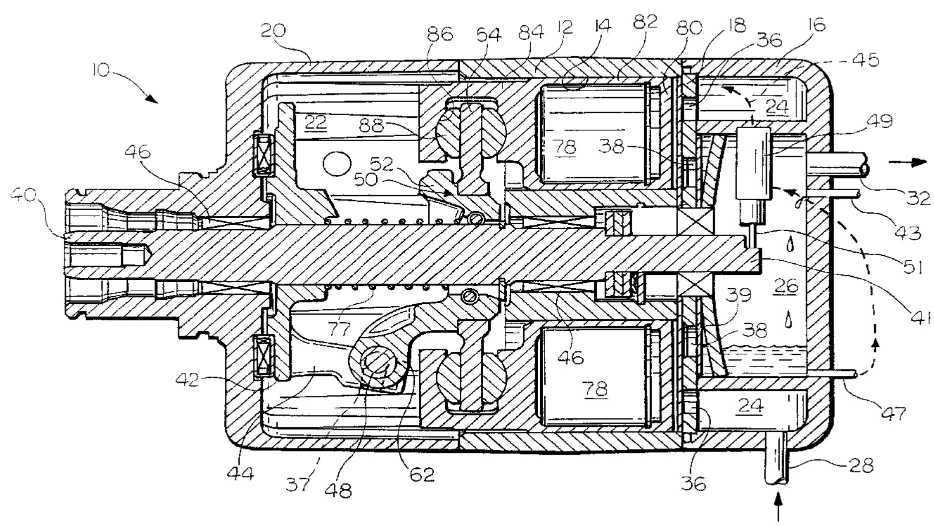
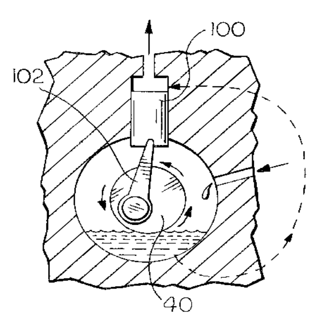
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A variable displacement swash plate type compressor which incorporates a lubricant pump coupled to one end of the drive shaft of the compressor, wherein the lubricant pump provides positive lubricant flow within the compressor and facilitates the lubrication of compressor components.

5 Claims, 2 Drawing Sheets





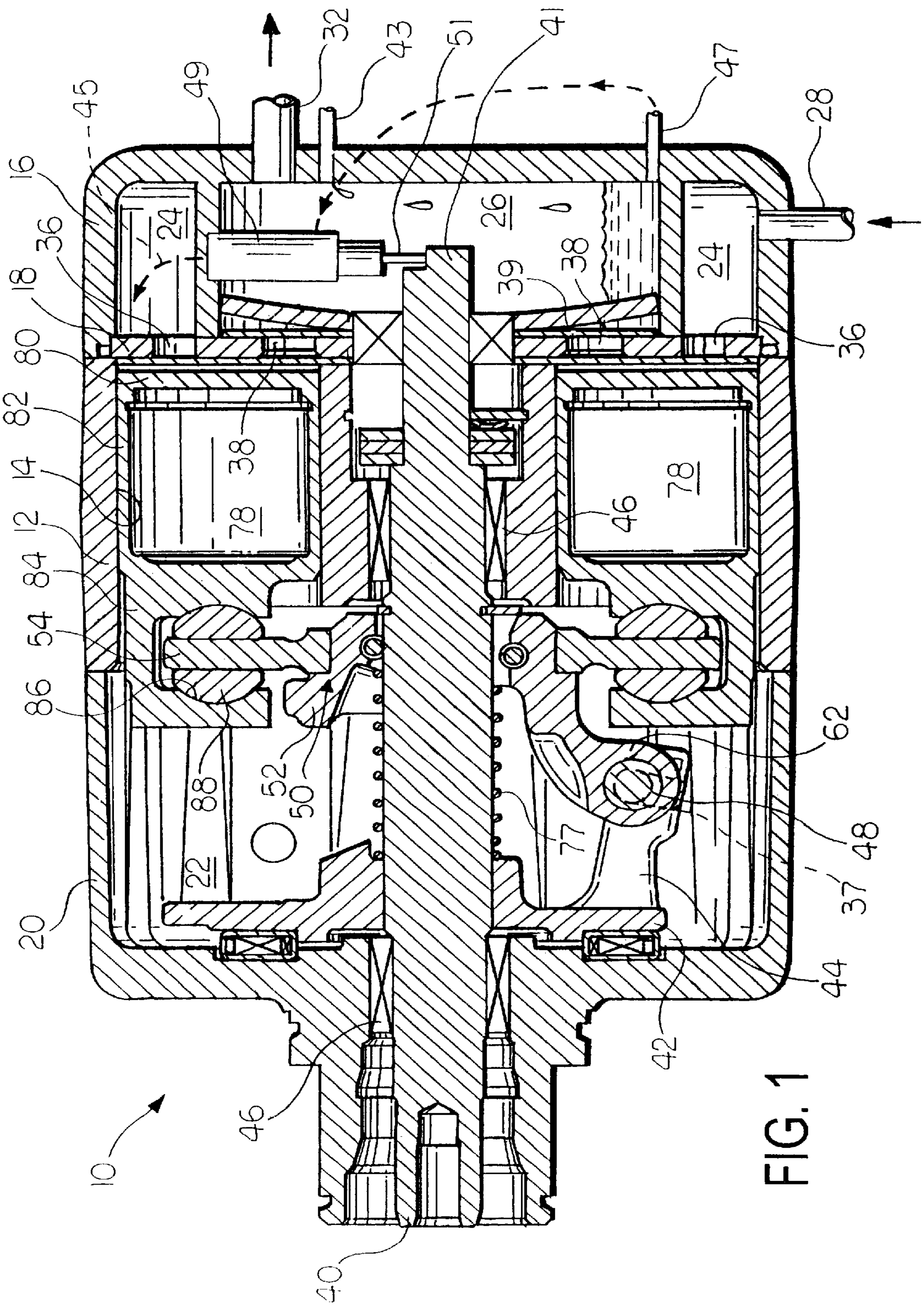

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FIG. 1

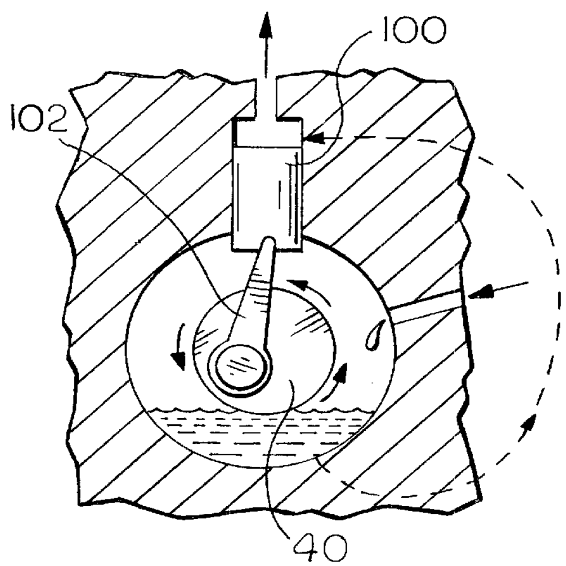

FIG. 2

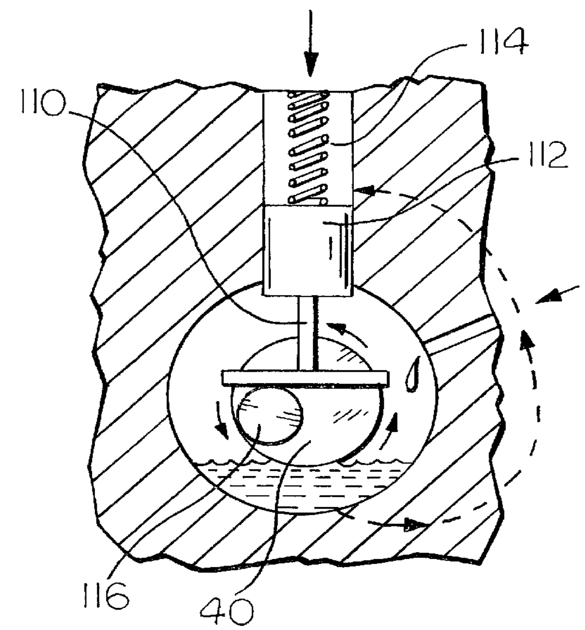

FIG. 3

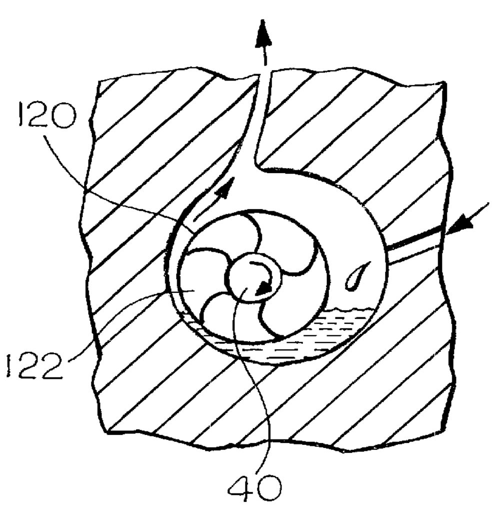

FIG. 4

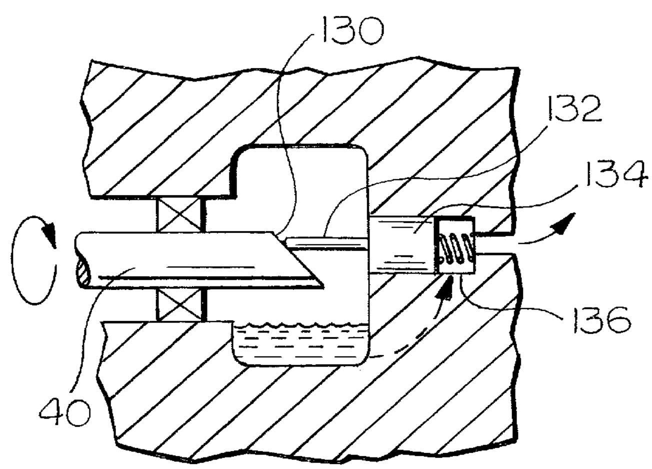

FIG. 5

LUBRICATION PUMP FOR A SWASH PLATE TYPE COMPRESSOR

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a variable displacement swash plate type compressor adapted for use in an air conditioning system for a vehicle, and more particularly to a lubricant pump coupled to one end of the drive shaft of the compressor to provide positive lubricant flow within the compressor and facilitate the lubrication of compressor components.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Variable displacement swash plate type compressors typically include a cylinder block provided with a number of cylinders, a piston disposed in each of the cylinders of the cylinder block, a crankcase sealingly disposed on one end of the cylinder block, a rotatably supported drive shaft, and a swash plate. The swash plate is adapted to be rotated by the drive shaft. Rotation of the swash plate is effective to reciprocatively drive the pistons. The length of the stroke of the pistons is varied by the inclination of the swash plate. Inclination of the swash plate is varied by controlling the pressure differential between a suction chamber and a crank chamber. The pressure differential is typically controlled using a control valve and an orifice tube which facilitates fluid communication between a discharge chamber and the crank chamber to convey compressed gases from the discharge chamber to the crank chamber based on pressure in a suction chamber.

The compressor arrangements of the prior art rely primarily on refrigerant flow to transport lubricant within the compressor. Therefore, ineffective lubrication of the close tolerance moving parts within the crank chamber occurs due to the lack of consistent flow of refrigerant gas from the discharge chamber to the crank chamber.

An object of the present invention is to produce a swash plate type compressor wherein positive lubricant flow within the compressor is achieved to result in improved lubrication of the compressor components.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The above, as well as other objects of the invention, may be readily achieved by a variable displacement swash plate type compressor comprising: a cylinder block having a plurality of cylinders arranged radially therein; a piston reciprocatively disposed in each of the cylinders of the cylinder block; a cylinder head attached to the cylinder block; a crankcase cooperating with the cylinder block to define a crank chamber; a drive shaft rotatably supported by the crankcase and the cylinder block; a swash plate adapted to be driven by the drive shaft, the swash plate having a central aperture for receiving the drive shaft, radially outwardly extending side walls, and a peripheral edge; and a lubricant pump coupled to one end of the drive shaft to provide positive lubricant flow within the compressor.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The above, as well as other objects, features, and advantages of the present invention will be understood from the detailed description of the preferred embodiment of the present invention with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

FIG. **1** is a cross sectional elevational view of a variable displacement swash plate type compressor incorporating the features of the invention, showing a pump connected to one end of the drive shaft pump;

FIG. **2** is a schematic view of an embodiment of the invention illustrating a lubricant pump coupled to the drive shaft of the compressor by means of a crank pin and an associated crank shaft;

FIG. **3** is a schematic view of another embodiment of the invention illustrating a lubricant pump having an inverted T-shaped piston rod driven by a crank pin and an associated crank shaft;

FIG. **4** is a schematic view of still another embodiment of the invention illustrating a centrifugal pump driven by one end of the compressor drive shaft; and

FIG. **5** is a schematic view of a lubricant pump driven in an axial direction by the one end of the drive shaft of the compressor.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Referring now to the drawings, and particularly FIG. **1**, there is shown generally at **10** a variable displacement swash plate type compressor incorporating the features of the invention. The compressor **10** includes a cylinder block **12** having a plurality of cylinders **14**. A cylinder head **16** is disposed adjacent one end of the cylinder block **12** and sealingly closes the end of the cylinder block **12**. A valve plate **18** is disposed between the cylinder block **12** and the cylinder head **16**. A crankcase **20** is sealingly disposed at the other end of the cylinder block **12**. The crankcase **20** and cylinder block **12** cooperate to form an airtight crank chamber **22**.

The cylinder head **16** includes a suction chamber **24** and a discharge chamber **26**. An inlet port **28** and associated inlet conduit provide fluid communication between the evaporator (not shown) of the cooling portion of the air conditioning system for a vehicle and the suction chamber **24**. An outlet port **32** and associated outlet conduit provide fluid communication between the discharge chamber **26** and the cooling portion of the air conditioning system for a vehicle. Suction ports **36** provide fluid communication between the suction chamber **24** and each cylinder **14**. Each suction port **36** is opened and closed by a suction valve. Discharge ports **38** provide fluid communication between each cylinder **14** and the discharge chamber **26**. Each discharge port **38** is opened and closed by a discharge valve. A retainer **39** restricts the opening of the discharge valve.

A drive shaft **40** is centrally disposed in and arranged to extend through the crankcase **20** to the cylinder block **12**. The drive shaft **40** is rotatably supported in the crankcase **20** by suitable bearings **46**.

Another embodiment of the invention is illustrated in FIG. **2** wherein a piston pump **100** is driven by a linkage drivingly engaged with the drive shaft **40** such as a connecting rod **102** eccentrically mounted on the drive shaft **40** of the associated compressor **10**. In all other respects, the lubricating system is the same as that illustrated and described in respect of FIG. **1**.

A swash plate **50** is formed to include a hub **52** and an annular plate **54** with opposing sides and a peripheral marginal edge. The hub **52** includes an annular main body having a centrally disposed aperture formed therein and an arm **62** that extends outwardly and perpendicularly from the surface of the hub **52**. An aperture is formed in the distal end of the arm **62** of the hub **52**. One end of the pin **48** is slidingly disposed in the slot **37** of the arm **44** of the rotor **42**, while the other end is fixedly disposed in the aperture of the arm **62**.

The annular plate **54** has a centrally disposed aperture formed therein to receive the annular main body of the hub **52**. The annular main body is press fit in the aperture of the annular plate **54**. The drive shaft **40** is adapted to extend through the hollow annular main body of the hub **52**.

A helical spring **77** is disposed to extend around the outer surface of the drive shaft **40**. One end of the spring **77** abuts the rotor **42**, while the opposite end abuts the hub **52** of the swash plate **50**.

A piston **78** is slidably disposed in each of the cylinders **14** in the cylinder block **12**. Each piston **78** includes a head **80**, a middle portion **82**, and a bridge portion **84**. The middle portion **82** terminates in the bridge portion **84** defining an interior space for receiving the peripheral marginal edge of the annular plate **54**. Spaced apart concave shoe pockets **86** are formed in the interior space of the bridge portion **84** for rotatably containing a pair of semi-spherical shoes **88**. The spherical surfaces of the shoes **88** are disposed in the shoe pockets **86** with a flat bearing surface disposed opposite the spherical surface for slidable engagement with the opposing sides of the annular plate **54**.

The operation of the compressor **10** is accomplished by rotation of the drive shaft **40** by an auxiliary drive means (not shown), which may typically be the internal combustion engine of an associated vehicle. Rotation of the drive shaft **40** causes the rotor **42** to correspondingly rotate with the drive shaft **40**. The swash plate **50** is connected to the rotor **42** by a hinge mechanism formed by the pin **48**.slidingly disposed in the slot **37** of the arm **44** of the rotor **42** and fixedly disposed in the aperture of the arm **62** of the hub **52**. As the rotor **42** rotates, the connection made by the pin **48** between the swash plate **50** and the rotor **42** causes the swash plate **50** to rotate. During rotation, the swash plate **50** is disposed at an inclination. The rotation of the swash plate **50** is effective to reciprocatively drive the pistons **78**. The rotation of the swash plate **50** further causes a sliding engagement between the opposing sides of the annular plate **54** and the cooperating spaced apart shoes **88**. The reciprocation of the pistons **78** causes refrigerant gas to be introduced from the suction chamber **24** into the respective cylinders **14** of the cylinder head **16**. The reciprocating motion of the pistons **78** then compresses the refrigerant gas within each cylinder **14**. When the pressure within each cylinder **14** exceeds the pressure within the discharge chamber **24**, the compressed refrigerant gas is discharged into the discharge chamber **26**.

The capacity of the compressor **10** can be changed by changing the inclination of the swash plate **50** and thereby changing the length of the stroke for the pistons **78**. The inclination of the swash plate **50** is changed by controlling the pressure differential between the crank chamber **22** and the suction chamber **24**. The pressure differential is controlled by controlling the net flow of refrigerant gas from the at least one cylinder **14** to the crank chamber **22**.

Specifically, as the piston **78** is caused to move toward a bottom dead center position, the pressure within the cylinder **14** is less than the pressure within the suction chamber **24**. A suction valve is caused to open causing refrigerant gas to flow into the cylinder **14** through the suction port **36**. The pressure within the crank chamber **22** remains at a level between the pressure within the suction chamber **24** and the pressure within the discharge chamber **26** during rotation of the drive shaft **40**.

Conversely, as the piston **78** is caused to move toward a top dead center position, the refrigerant gas within the cylinder **14** is compressed until the pressure within the cylinder **14** is caused to exceed the pressure within the discharge chamber **26**. A discharge valve is caused to open and refrigerant gas is caused to flow through the discharge port **38** to the discharge chamber **26**.

Further, as the piston **78** is caused to move toward a bottom dead center position within the at least one cylinder **14**, the pressure within the cylinder **14** is less than the pressure within the crank chamber **22**, causing refrigerant gas to flow to the cylinder **14**. As the piston **78** is caused to move toward a top dead center position, the refrigerant gas within the cylinder **14** is compressed causing the pressure within the cylinder **14** to increase and exceed the pressure within the crank chamber **22**. When the pressure within the cylinder **14** exceeds the pressure within the crank chamber **22**, refrigerant gas is caused to flow to the crank chamber **22**. Additionally, as the refrigerant gas within the cylinder **14** is compressed, the net flow and the rate of flow of refrigerant gas from the cylinder **14** to the crank chamber **22** are increased and become positive.

It is contemplated by the present invention to further increase the lubricating efficiency of the compressor **10** by providing a positive lubricant flow within the compressor **10** through the utilization of an auxiliary pump driven by the drive shaft **40** of the compressor.

The resulting system will provide positive lubricant flow within the compressor **10** to effectively lubricate critical areas of the compressor **10** without relying on refrigerant flow. Prior systems typically rely on the flow of refrigerant to transport the lubricant through the compressor. In cases of low refrigerant flow rates, the resultant lubrication was sometimes not adequate to achieve maximum performance and life span to the compressor.

Attention is directed to FIG. **1** which discloses the addition of a lubricant receiving reservoir which surrounds the terminal end **41** of the drive shaft **40**. The reservoir is defined by the discharge chamber **26** an oil inlet **43**, an oil outlet **45**, and a suction line **47** interconnecting the sump portion of the reservoir with an oil inlet of an associated pump **49**.

The pump **49** is a piston-type pump having a reciprocatively mounted operating rod **51**. The end of the rod **51** is caused to be in contact with a cam surface formed on the end **41** of the drive shaft **40**. As the drive shaft **40** is rotated, the operating rod **51** is caused to be reciprocated to drive a piston of the pump **49** which in turn discharges lubricating oil to critical parts of the compressor through the oil outlet **45**.

It will be appreciated that the lubricating oil introduced into the reservoir through the inlet **43** is routed from a refrigerant/oil separator located remotely of the compressor (not shown).

Another embodiment of the invention is illustrated in FIG. **2** wherein a piston pump **100** is driven by a linkage drivingly engaged with and pivotally attached to the drive shaft **40** such as a connecting rod **102** eccentrically mounted on the drive shaft **40** of the associated compressor **10**. In all other respects, the lubricating system is the same as that illustrated and described in respect of FIG. **1**.

Still another embodiment of the invention is illustrated in FIG. **3** wherein the piston **110** of the lubricating pump **112** is biased by a compression spring **114** which functions to bias the inverted T-shaped piston **110** of the pump **112** against an eccentrically formed cam member **116** on the end of the driveshaft **40**.

It will be understood that the piston pump could be replaced by a centrifugal pump **120**, as illustrated in FIG. **4**, wherein the drive shaft **40** of the compressor **10** could be connected to the impeller **122** of the centrifugal pump **120** which would be effective to pump the lubricant through the compressor system.

In a like manner, the use of types of pumps such as a gear pump, trochoidal pump, vane type pump, bellows, scroll or screw type could be coupled to the end of the drive shaft to pump lubricant through the compressor system.

FIG. **5** shares still another embodiment of the invention whereas the pumping action is accomplished in an axial direction in respect of the axis of the drive shaft **40** of the compressor **10**. In the illustrated embodiment, the end of the drive shaft **40** of the compressor **10** is formed with a camming surface **130** which is used to cam a piston rod **132** of a spring biased piston **134** of a piston pump **136**.

It will further be understood that while the aforedescribed embodiments of the invention have utilized a pumping member which is attached to the end of the compressor drive shaft, satisfactory results can likewise be achieved by transferring the rotating shaft energy to an associated lubricant pump by means of cams and/or linkages.

An additional benefit of the present invention is that oil present in the refrigerant gas provides lubrication to the close tolerance moving components of the compressor **10**. The lubrication maximizes the durability of the compressor **10**.

From the foregoing description, one ordinarily skilled in the art can easily ascertain the essential characteristics of this invention and, without departing from the spirit and scope thereof, can make various changes and modifications to the invention to adapt it to various usages and conditions.

What is claimed is:

1. A variable displacement swash plate type compressor comprising:

a cylinder block having a plurality of cylinders arranged radially therein;

a piston reciprocatively disposed in each of the cylinders of said cylinder block;

a cylinder head attached to said cylinder block;

a crankcase cooperating with said cylinder block to define a crank chamber;

a drive shaft rotatably supported by said crankcase and said cylinder block, said drive shaft having a first end and a second end;

a linkage drivingly engaged with the first end of said drive shaft;

a swash plate adapted to be driven by said drive shaft, said swash plate having a central aperture for receiving said drive shaft, radially outwardly extending side walls, and a peripheral edge; and

a lubricant pump drivingly engaged with said linkage to provide positive lubricant flow within the compressor.

2. A variable capacity swash plate type compressor as defined in claim **1**, wherein said pump is a piston-type pump.

3. A variable displacement swash plate type compressor comprising:

a cylinder block having a plurality of cylinders arranged radially therein;

a piston reciprocatively disposed in each of the cylinders of said cylinder block;

a cylinder head attached to said cylinder block;

a crankcase cooperating with said cylinder block to define a crank chamber;

a drive shaft rotatably supported by said crankcase and said cylinder block, said drive shaft having a first end and a second end;

a linkage pivotally attached to the first end of said drive shaft;

a swash plate adapted to be driven by said drive shaft, said swash plate having a central aperture for receiving said drive shaft, radially outwardly extending side walls, and a peripheral edge; and

a lubricant pump drivingly engaged with said linkage to provide positive lubricant flow within the compressor.

4. A variable capacity swash plate type compressor as defined in claim **3**, wherein said pump is a piston-type pump.

5. A variable displacement swash plate type compressor comprising:

a cylinder block having a plurality of cylinders arranged radially therein;

a piston reciprocatively disposed in each of the cylinders of said cylinder block;

a cylinder head attached to said cylinder block;

a crankcase cooperating with said cylinder block to define a crank chamber;

a drive shaft rotatably supported by said crankcase and said cylinder block, said drive shaft having a first end and a second end;

a connecting rod having a first end and a second end, the first end of said connecting rod eccentrically and pivotally attached to the first end of said drive shaft;

a swash plate adapted to be driven by said drive shaft, said swash plate having a central aperture for receiving said drive shaft, radially outwardly extending side walls, and a peripheral edge; and

a piston-type lubricant pump to provide positive lubricant flow within the compressor, said pump having a piston reciprocally disposed therein, the piston connected to said connecting rod.

* * * * *