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A 144 MHz Duplexer

Obtaining sufficient isolation between the transmitter and receiver of a repeater can be difficult. Many of the solutions to this problem compromise receiver sensitivity or transmitter power output. Other solutions create an imbalance between receiver and transmitter coverage areas. When a duplexer is used, insertion loss is the compromise. But a small amount of insertion loss is more than offset by the use of one antenna for both the transmitter and receiver. Using one antenna assures equal antenna patterns for both transmitting and receiving, and reduces cost, maintenance and mechanical complexity.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, duplexers may be built in the home workshop. Bob Shriner, WAØUZO, presented a small, mechanically simple duplexer for low-power applications in April 1979 *QST*. Shriner's design is unique, as the duplexer cavities are constructed of circuit-board material. Low cost and simplicity are the result, but with a trade-off in performance. A silver-plated version of Shriner's design has an insertion loss of approximately 5 dB at 146 MHz. The loss is greater if the copper is not plated, and increases as the inner walls of the cavities tarnish.

This duplexer construction project by John Bilodeau, W1GAN, represents an effective duplexer. The information originally appeared in July 1972 *QST*. It is a time-proven project used by many repeater groups, and can be duplicated relatively easily. Its insertion loss is just 1.5 dB.

Fig 21 will help you visualize the requirements for a duplexer, which can be summed up as follows. The duplexer must attenuate the transmitter carrier to avoid overloading the receiver and thereby reducing its sensitivity. It must also attenuate any noise or spurious frequencies from the transmitter on or near the receiver frequency. In addition, a duplexer must provide a proper impedance match between transmitter, antenna, and receiver.

As shown in Fig 21, transmitter output on 146.94 MHz going from point C to D should not be attenuated. However, the transmitter energy should be greatly attenuated between points B and A. Duplexer section 2 should attenuate any noise or signals that are on or near the receiver input frequency of 146.34 MHz. For good reception the noise and spurious signal level must be less than –130 dBm (0 dBm = 1 milliwatt into 50 Ω). Typical transmitter noise 600 kHz away from the carrier frequency is 80 dB below the transmitter power output. For 60 watts of output (+48 dBm), the noise level is –32 dBm. The duplexer must make up the difference between –32 dBm and –130 dBm, or 98 dB.

The received signal must go from point B to A with a minimum of attenuation. Section 1 of the duplexer must also provide enough attenuation of the transmitter energy to prevent receiver overload. For an average receiver, the transmitter signal must be less than –30 dBm to meet this requirement. The difference between the transmitter output of +48 dBm and the receiver overload point of –30 dBm, 78 dB, must be made up by duplexer section 1.

THE CIRCUIT

Fig 22 shows the completed 6-cavity duplexer, and **Fig 23** shows the assembly of an individual cavity. A $^1/_4$-λ resonator was selected for this duplexer design. The length of the center conductor is adjusted by turning a threaded rod, which changes the resonant frequency of the cavity. Energy is coupled into and out of the tuned circuit by the coupling loops extending through the top plate.

The cavity functions as a series resonant circuit. When a reactance is connected across a series resonant circuit, an anti-resonant notch is produced, and the resonant frequency is shifted. If a capacitor is added, the notch appears below the resonant frequency. Adding inductance instead of capacitance makes the notch appear above the resonant frequency. The value of the added component determines the spacing between the notch and the resonant frequency of the cavity.

Fig 24 shows the measured band-pass characteristics of the cavity with shunt elements. With the cavity tuned to 146.94 MHz and a shunt capacitor connected from input to output, a 146.34-MHz signal is attenuated by 35 dB. If an inductance is placed across the cavity and the cavity is tuned to 146.34 MHz, the attenuation at 146.94 MHz is 35 dB. Insertion loss in both cases is 0.4 dB. Three cavities with shunt capacitors are tuned to 146.94 MHz and connected together in cascade with short lengths of coaxial cable. The attenuation at 146.34 MHz is more than 100 dB, and insertion loss at 146.94 MHz is 1.5 dB. Response curves for a six-cavity duplexer are given in **Fig 25**.

Construction

The schematic diagram for the duplexer is shown in **Fig 26**. Three parts for the duplexer must be machined; all oth-

Table 1
Product Matrix Showing Repeater Equipment and Manufacturer by Frequency Band

	Antennas							*Duplexers*				*Cavity Filters*			
Source	*28*	*50*	*144*	*220*	*450*	*902*	*1296*	*144*	*220*	*450*	*902*	*144*	*220*	*450*	*902*
Austin	S	S	S	S	S	S	S								
Celwave	C	C	C	C	C	C		C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Comet															
Cushcraft		C	C	C	C										
Dec Prod		C	C	C	C	C		C	C		C	C		C	
MA/COM												C		C	
RF Parts			C		C	C	C								
Sinclair	C	C	C					C		C		C		C	C
TX/RX								C	C	C		C		C	C
Wacom															

	Isolators/Circulators						*Transmitter Combiners*				*Cross-Band Couplers*			
Source	*28*	*50*	*144*	*220*	*450*	*902*	*144*	*220*	*450*	*902*	*0-174 450-512*	*0-512 800-960*	*59-174 806-960*	*406-512 806-960*
Celwave			C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C		S		
Dec Prod			C		C	C		C	C	C				
Sinclair			C		C	C								
TX/RX			C		C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C
Wacom			C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C		C		C

Abbreviated names above are for the following manufacturers: Austin Antennas, Celwave RF Inc, Cushcraft Corp, Decibel Products Inc, RF Parts, Sinclair Radio Laboratories Inc, TX/RX Systems Inc and Wacom Inc. A manufacturer's contact list appears in Chapter 21.

Key to codes used:
C = catalog (standard) item
S = special-order item

Note: Coaxial cable is not listed, because most manufacturers sell only to dealers.

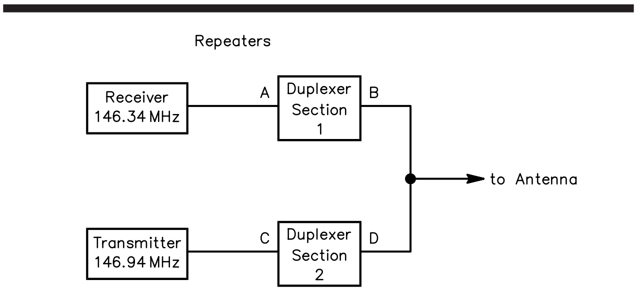

Fig 21—Duplexers permit using one antenna for both transmitting and receiving in a repeater system. Section 1 prevents energy at the transmitter frequency from interfering with the receiver, while section 2 attenuates any off-frequency transmitter energy that is at or near the receiver frequency.

ers can be made with hand tools. A small lathe can be used to machine the brass top plate, the threaded tuning plunger bushing and the Teflon insulator bushing. The dimensions of these parts are given in **Fig 27**.

Type DWV copper tubing is used for the outer conductor of the cavities. The wall thickness is 0.058 inch, with an outside diameter of $4^1/_8$ inches. You will need a tubing cutter large enough to handle this size (perhaps borrowed or rented). The wheel of the cutter should be tight and sharp. Make slow, careful cuts so the ends will be square. The outer conductor is $22^1/_2$ inches long.

The inner conductor is made from type M copper tubing having an outside diameter of $1^3/_8$ inches. A 6-inch length of 1-inch OD brass tubing is used to make the tuning plunger.

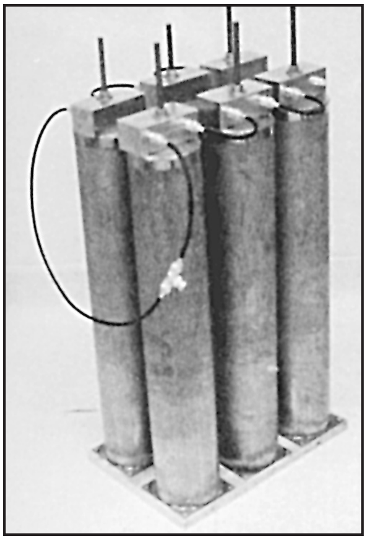

Fig 22—A six-cavity duplexer for use with a 144-MHz repeater. The cavities are fastened to a plywood base for mechanical stability. Short lengths of double-shielded cable are used for connections between individual cavities. An insertion loss of less than 1.5 dB is possible with this design.

The tubing types mentioned above are designations used in the plumbing and steam-fitting industry. Other types may be used in the construction of a duplexer, but you should check the sizes carefully to assure that the parts will fit each other. A greater wall thickness will make the assembly heavier, and the expense will increase accordingly. Soft solder is used throughout the assembly. Unless you have experience with silver solder, do not use it. Eutectic type 157 solder with paste or acid flux makes very good joints. This type has a slightly higher melting temperature than ordinary tin-lead alloy, but has considerably greater strength.

First solder the inner conductor to the top plate (**Fig 28**). The finger stock can then be soldered inside the lower end of the inner conductor, while temporarily held in place with a plug made of aluminum or stainless steel. While soldering, do not allow the flame from the torch to overheat the finger stock. The plunger bushing is soldered

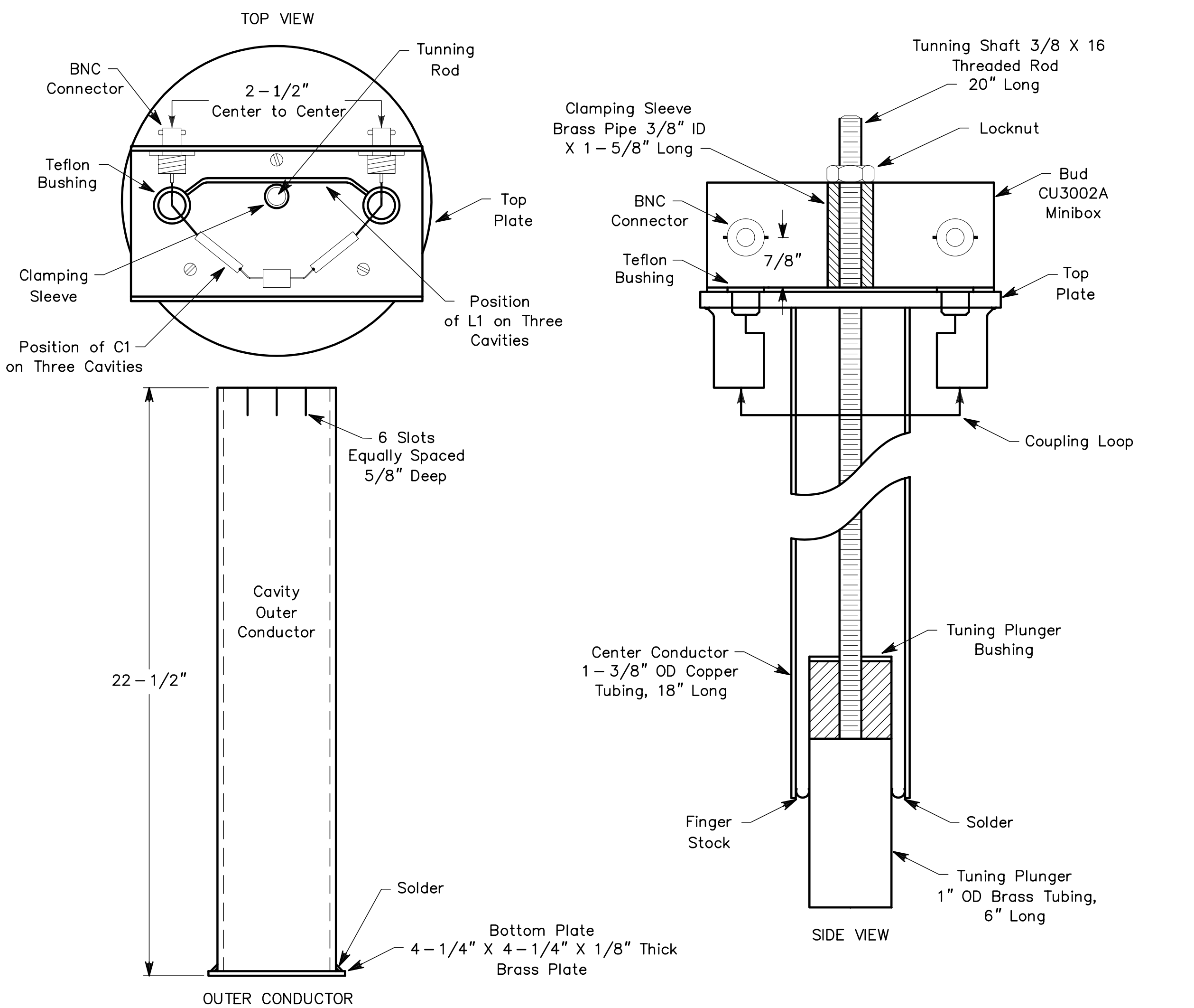

Fig 23—The assembly of an individual cavity. A Bud Minibox is mounted on the top plate with three screws. A clamping sleeve made of brass pipe is used to prevent crushing the box when the locknut is tightened on the tuning shaft. Note that the positions of both C1 and L1 are shown, but that three cavities will have C1 installed and three will have L1 in place.

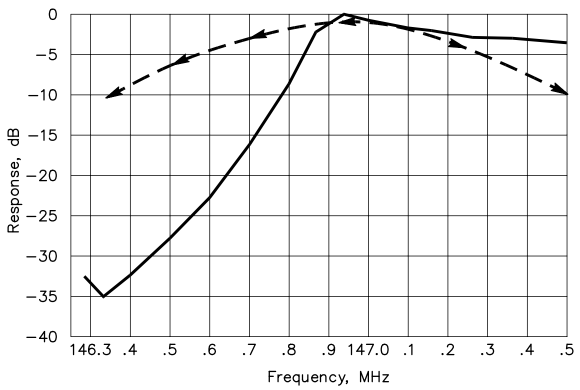

Fig 24—Typical frequency response of a single cavity of the type used in the duplexer. The dotted line represents the passband characteristics of the cavity alone; the solid line for the cavity with a shunt capacitor connected between input and output. An inductance connected in the same manner will cause the rejection notch to be above the frequency to which the cavity is tuned.

into the tuning plunger and a 20-inch length of threaded rod is soldered into the bushing.

Cut six slots in the top of the outer conductor. They should be $^{5}/_{8}$ inch deep and equally spaced around the tubing. The bottom end of the 4-inch tubing is soldered to the square bottom plate. The bottom plates have holes in the corners so they can be fastened to a plywood base by means of wood screws. Because the center conductor has no support at one end, the cavities must be mounted vertically.

The size and position of the coupling loops are critical. Follow the given dimensions closely. Both loops should be $^{1}/_{8}$ inch away from the center conductor on opposite sides. Connect a solder lug to the ground end of the loop, then fasten the lug to the top plate with a screw. The free end of the loop is insulated by Teflon bushings where it passes through the top plate for connection to the BNC fittings.

Before final assembly of the parts, clean them thoroughly. Soap-filled steel wool pads and hot water work well for this. Be sure the finger stock makes firm contact with the tuning plunger. The top plate should fit snugly in the top of the outer conductor—a large hose clamp tightened around the outer conductor will keep the top plate in place.

ADJUSTMENT

After the cavities have been checked for band-pass characteristics and insertion loss, install the anti-resonant elements, C1 and L1. (See Fig 24.) It is preferable to use laboratory test equipment when tuning the duplexer. An option is to use a low-power transmitter with an RF probe and an electronic voltmeter. Both methods are shown in **Fig 29**.

With the test equipment connected as shown in Fig 29A, adjust the signal generator frequency to the desired repeater input frequency. Connect a calibrated step attenuator between points X and Y. With no attenuation, adjust the HP-415 for 0 on the 20-dB scale. You can check the calibration of the 415 by switching in different amounts of attenuation and noting the meter reading. You may note a

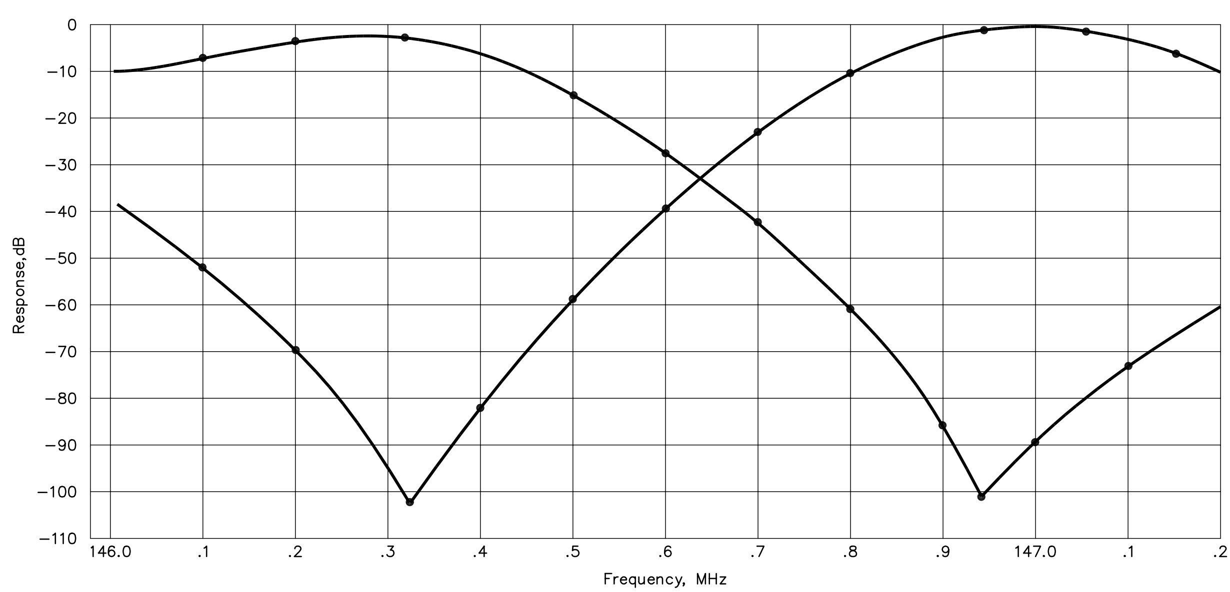

Fig 25—Frequency response of the six-cavity duplexer. One set of three cavities is tuned to pass 146.34 MHz and notch 146.94 MHz (the receiver leg). The remaining set of three cavities is tuned to pass 146.94 MHz and notch 146.34 MHz. This duplexer provides approximately 100 dB of isolation between the transmitter and receiver when properly tuned.

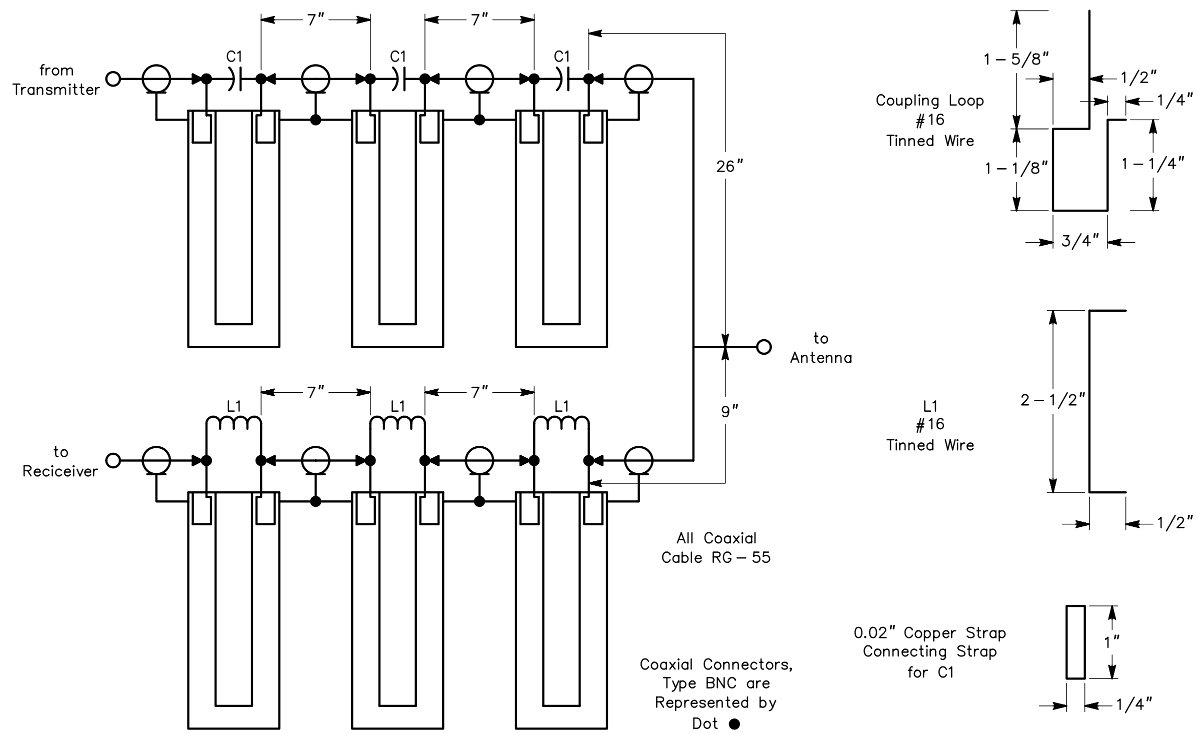

Fig 26—Diagram of the six-cavity duplexer. Coaxial cable lengths between cavities are critical and must be followed closely. Double shielded cable and high quality connectors should be used throughout. The sizes and shapes of the coupling loops, L1, and the straps for connecting C1 should be observed.
C1—1.7-11 pF circuit-board mount, E. F. Johnson 189-5-5 or equiv. Set at $^3/_4$ closed for initial alignment.

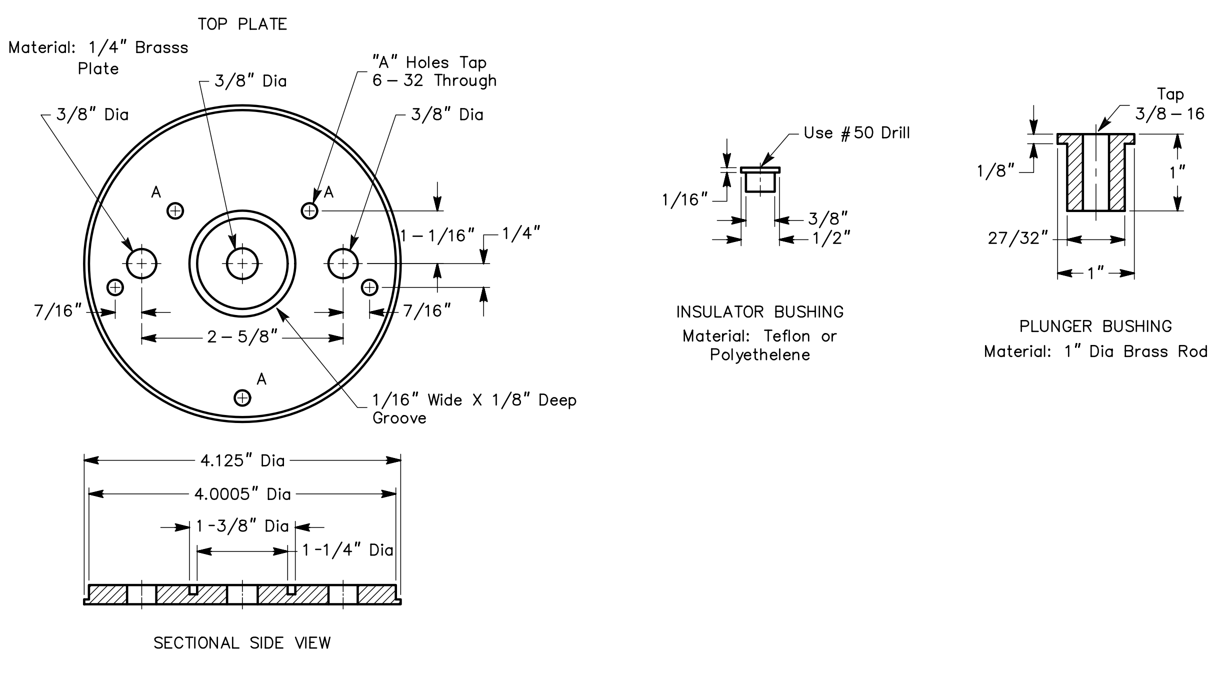

Fig 27—Dimensions for the three parts that require machining. A small metal-working lathe should be used for making these parts.

small error at either high or very low signal levels.

Next, remove the step attenuator and replace it with a cavity that has the shunt inductor, L1, in place. Adjust the tuning screw for maximum reading on the 415 meter. Remove the cavity and connect points X and Y. Set the signal generator to the repeater output frequency and adjust the 415 for a 0 reading on the 20-dB scale.

Reinsert the cavity between X and Y and adjust the cavity tuning for minimum reading on the 415. The notch should be sharp and have a depth of at least 35 dB. It is important to maintain the minimum reading on the meter while tightening the locknut on the tuning shaft.

To check the insertion loss of the cavity, the output from the signal generator should be reduced, and the calibration of the 415 meter checked on the 50-dB expanded scale. Use a fixed 1-dB attenuator to make certain the error is less than 0.1 dB. Replace the attenuator with the cavity and read the loss. The insertion loss should be 0.5 dB or less. The procedure is the same for tuning all six cavities, except that the frequencies are reversed for those having the shunt capacitor installed.

Adjustment with Minimum Equipment

A transmitter with a minimum of spurious output is required. Most modern transmitters meet this requirement. The voltmeter in use should be capable of reading 0.5 volt (or less), full scale. The RF probe used should be rated to 150 MHz or higher. Sections of RG-58 cable are used as attenuators, as shown in Fig 29B. The loss in these 140-foot lengths is nearly 10 dB, and helps to isolate the transmitter in case of mismatch during tuning.

Set the transmitter to the repeater input frequency and connect P and Q. Obtain a reading between 1 and 3 volts on the voltmeter. Insert a cavity with shunt capacitors in place between P and Q and adjust the cavity tuning for a minimum reading on the voltmeter. (This reading should be between 0.01 and 0.05 volt.) The rejection in dB can be calculated by

$$dB = 20 \log (V1/V2)$$

This should be at least 35 dB. Check the insertion loss by putting the receiver on the repeater output frequency and noting the voltmeter reading with the cavity out of the circuit. A 0.5-dB attenuator can be made from a 7-foot length of RG-58. This 7-foot cable can be used to check the calibration of the detector probe and the voltmeter.

Cavities with shunt inductance can be tuned the same way, but with the frequencies reversed. If two or more cavities are tuned while connected together, transmitter noise can cause the rejection readings to be low. In other words, there will be less attenuation.

Results

The duplexer is conservatively rated at 150 watts input, but if constructed carefully should be able to handle as much as 300 watts. Silver plating the interior

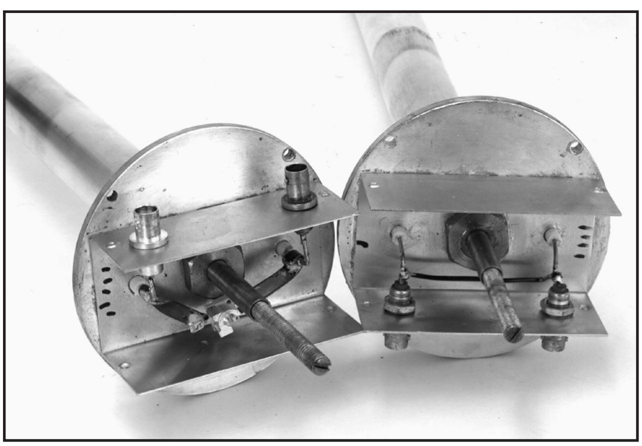

Fig 28—Two of the center conductor and top plate assemblies. In the assembly at the left, C1 is visible just below the tuning shaft, mounted by short straps made from sheet copper. The assembly on the right has L1 in place between the BNC connectors. The Miniboxes are fastened to the top plate by a single large nut in these units. Using screws through the Minibox into the top plate, as described in the text, is preferred.

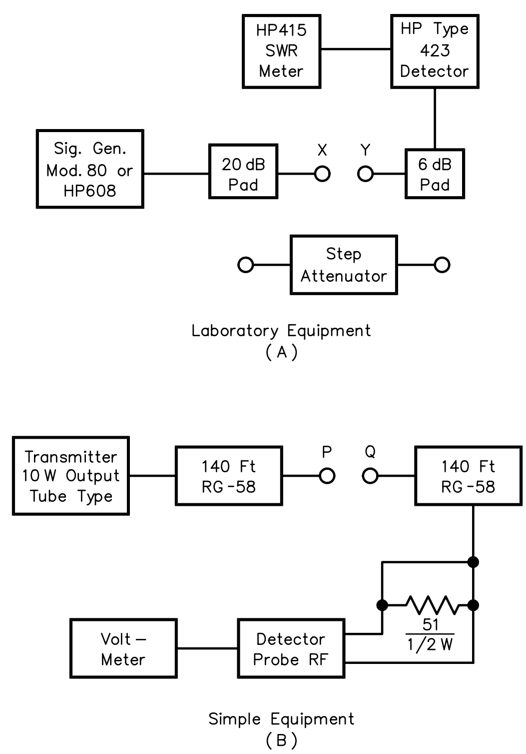

Fig 29—The duplexer can be tuned by either of the two methods shown here, although the method depicted at A is preferred. The signal generator should be modulated by a 1-kHz tone. If the setup shown at B is used, the transmitter should not be modulated, and should have a minimum of noise and spurious signals. The cavities to be aligned are inserted between X and Y in the setup at A, and between P and Q in B.

surfaces of the cavities is recommended if input power is to be greater than 150 watts. A duplexer of this type with silver-plated cavities has an insertion loss of less than 1 dB, and a rejection of more than 100 dB. Unplated cavities should be disassembled at least every two years, cleaned thoroughly, and then retuned.

Miscellaneous Notes

1) Double shielded cable and high quality connectors are *required* throughout the system.
2) The SWR of the antenna should not exceed 1.2:1 for proper duplexer performance.
3) Good shielding of the transmitter and receiver at the repeater is essential.
4) The antenna should have four or more wavelengths of vertical separation from the repeater.
5) Conductors in the near field of the antenna should be well bonded and grounded to eliminate noise.

6) The feed line should be electrically bonded and mechanically secured to the tower or mast.
7) Feed lines and other antennas in the near field of the repeater antenna should be well bonded and as far from the repeater antenna as possible.
8) Individual cavities can be used to improve the performance of separate antenna or separate site repeaters.
9) Individual cavities can be used to help solve inter-modulation problems.

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