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(54) **GAS CONDITIONING PROCESS FOR THE RECOVERY OF LPG/NGL (C2+) FROM LNG**

Related U.S. Application Data

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

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Liquefied petroleum gas or natural gas liquids may be recovered from liquefied natural gas by receiving an input stream comprising substantially rich liquefied natural gas, splitting the input stream into a direct stream and a bypass stream, heating the direct stream in a cross-exchanger to produce a stream of heat rich liquefied natural gas, splitting the heated rich liquefied natural gas into a primary column feed, an optional bypass stream and a secondary column feed.

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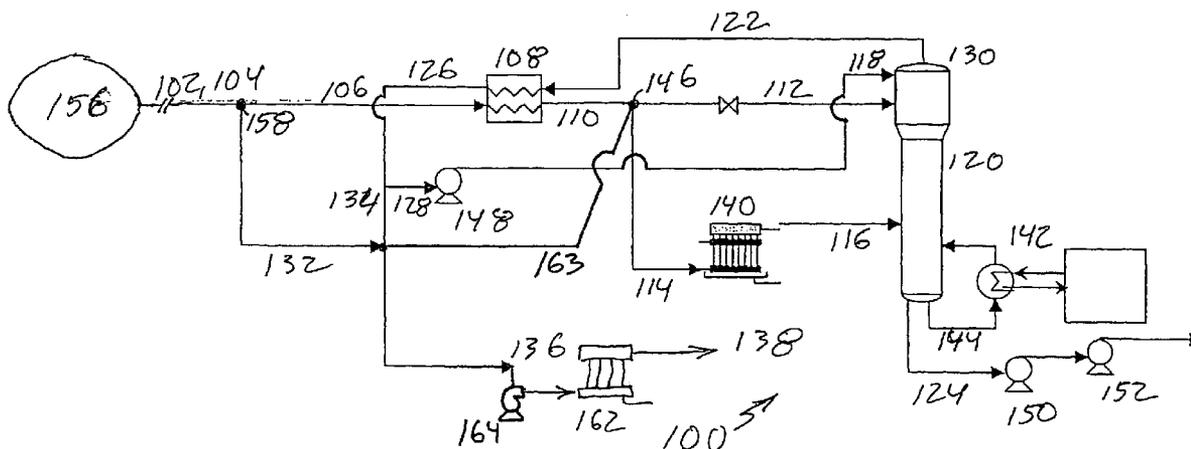
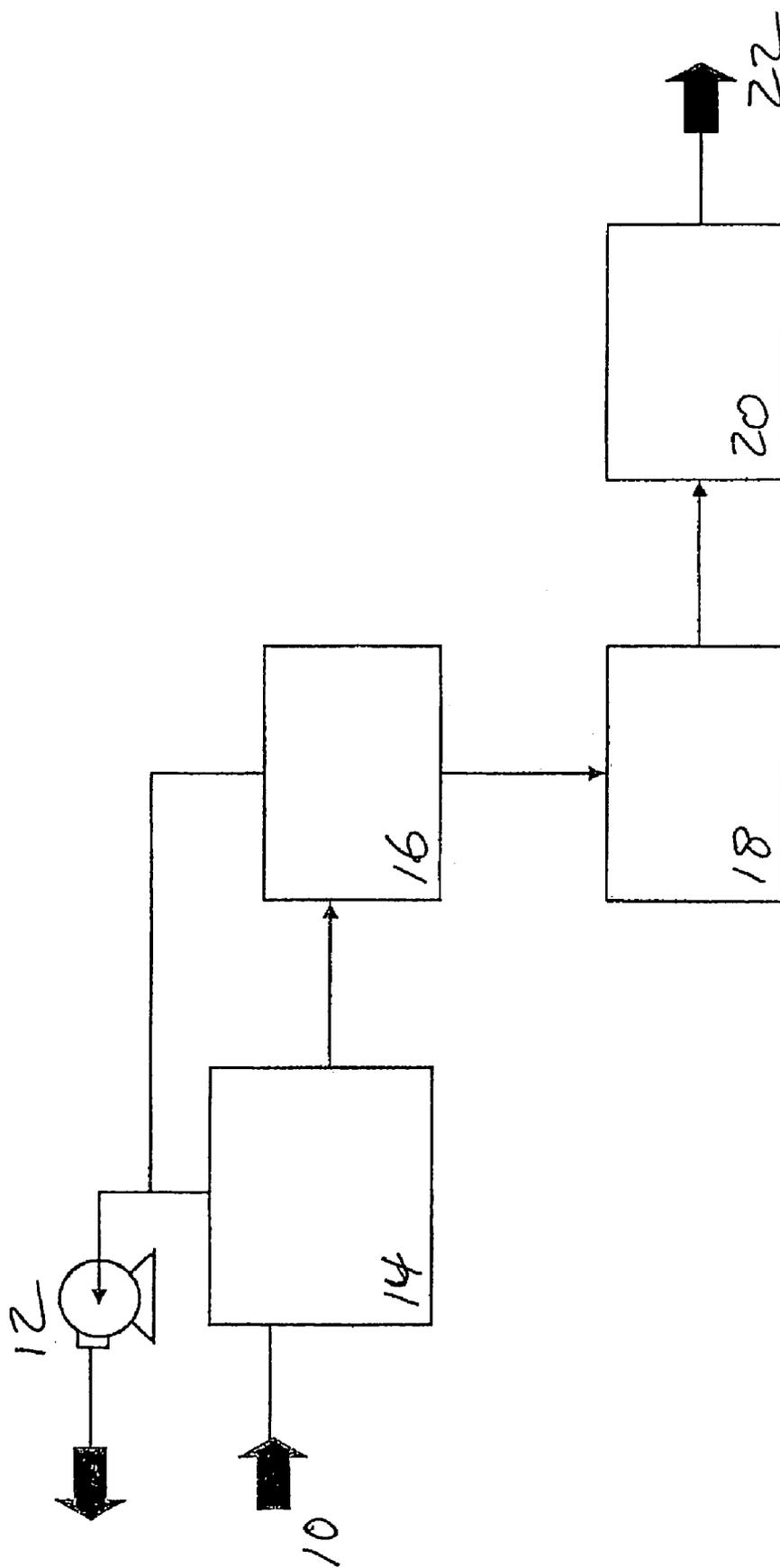


FIG. 1

Related Art



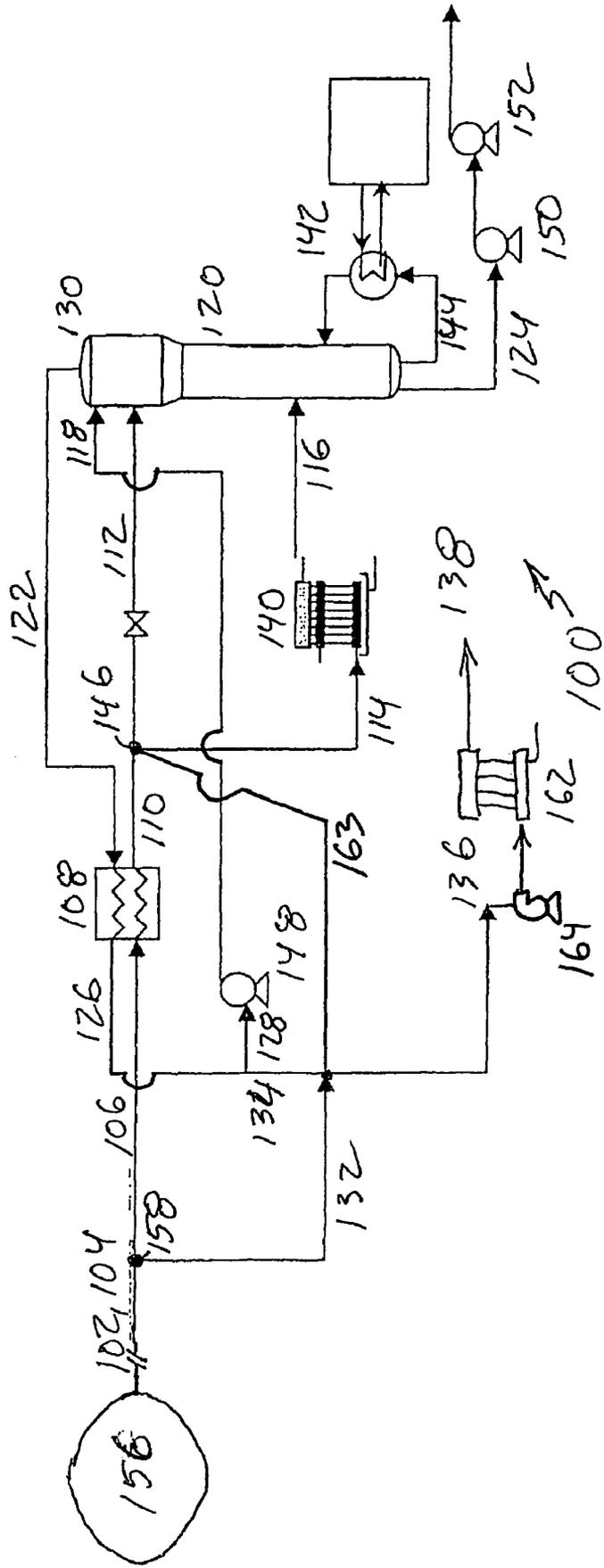
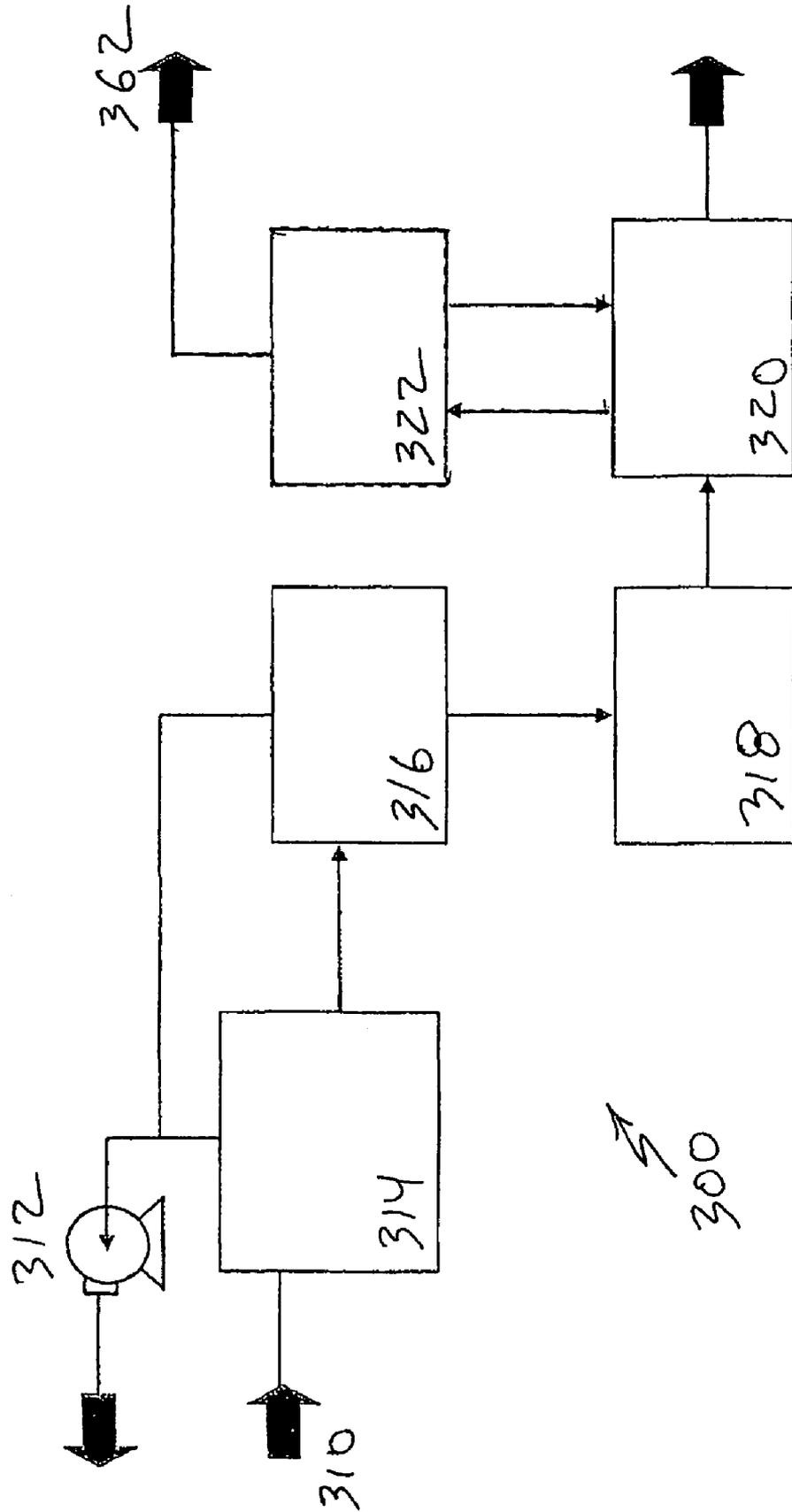


FIG. 2

FIG. 3



GAS CONDITIONING PROCESS FOR THE RECOVERY OF LPG/NGL (C₂₊) FROM LNG

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims priority to Provisional Application Ser. No. 60/536,731, filed Jan. 16, 2004, the disclosure of which is incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] 1. Field of the Invention

[0003] This invention relates to the field of liquefied natural gas (LNG) gas conditioning processes, and in particular to the recovery of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) containing propane and heavier components or natural gas liquids (NGL) containing ethane and heavier components (C₂₊) from LNG.

[0004] 2. Description of the Related Art

[0005] Natural gas is often produced at remote locations that are far from pipelines. An alternative to transporting natural gas through a pipeline is to liquefy the natural gas and transport it in special LNG tankers. Natural gas may be liquefied by compressing it or by cooling it. An LNG handling and storage terminal is necessary to receive the compressed or cooled liquefied natural gas and revaporize it for use. The re-vaporized natural gas may then be used as a gaseous fuel.

[0006] A typical LNG handling, storage and revaporization facility, such as the one shown in FIG. 1, may include an incoming stream of LNG 10, a ship vapor return blower 12, LNG storage and send out pumps 14, a boil off gas compression and condensation unit 16, LNG booster pumps 18, LNG vaporizers 20, and an outgoing stream to a natural gas pipeline 22.

[0007] Natural gas in general, and LNG in particular, is usually comprised mostly of methane (C₁). Natural gas may also, however, contain lesser amounts of heavier hydrocarbons such as ethane (C₂), propane (C₃), butanes (C₄) and the like, which are collectively known as propane plus, or C₂₊.

[0008] Natural gas shipped over a pipeline, for example, may need to conform to a particular specification for heating value. Since various hydrocarbons have various heating values, it is often necessary to separate some or all of the heavier hydrocarbons from the methane in the LNG so that the gaseous fuel resulting from vaporizing the LNG has the right heating value. Furthermore, heavier hydrocarbons have a higher value as liquid products (for use as petrochemical feed stocks, for example) than as fuel, and it is thus often desirable to separate the heavier hydrocarbons from the methane.

[0009] A heating value specified by a pipeline may change over time. Some of the customers of the pipeline may be satisfied with lean natural gas, while others may be, willing to pay for higher heating values. A natural gas recovery system in which all incoming LNG passes through a single point of entry, or even a plurality of symmetrical points of entry, may be unable to blend heating values to suit various pipeline specifications.

[0010] Fractionation units, such as distillation or de-methanation units, may use heat exchangers to recover some of the heat left in the product stream and use it to heat the incoming feed streams. In some cases there is insufficient heat in the product for a particular hydrocarbon to be effectively separated. In some cases there is, a need to boost the heat of an incoming stream to more effectively separate a particular hydrocarbon. In some cases a middle feed, for example,

receives adequate heat from the product stream while a bottom feed, for example, is too cool, and requires some further energy input to effectively separate some particular hydrocarbon.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0011] A primary object of the invention is to overcome the deficiencies of the related art described above by providing a gas conditioning process for the recovery of liquefied petroleum gas or natural gas liquids (C₂₊) from liquefied natural gas. The present invention achieves these objects and others by providing a gas conditioning process for the recovery of liquefied petroleum gas or natural gas liquids (C₂₊) from liquefied natural gas.

[0012] In several aspects, the invention may provide a gas conditioning process for the recovery of liquefied petroleum gas or natural gas liquids (C₂₊) from liquefied natural gas.

[0013] In particular, in a first embodiment a method for recovery of liquefied petroleum gas or natural gas liquids from liquefied natural gas may include the steps of receiving an input stream comprising substantially rich liquefied natural gas, splitting the input stream into a direct stream and a bypass stream, heating the direct stream in a cross-exchanger to produce a stream of heated rich liquefied natural gas, splitting the heated rich liquefied natural gas into a primary column feed and a secondary column feed, vaporizing at least a major portion of the secondary column feed in a vaporizer to produce a vaporized secondary column feed, fractionating the top feed, the primary column feed, and the vaporized secondary column feed in a fractionation unit to produce an overhead product stream and a bottom product stream, condensing at least a major portion of the overhead product stream by cooling the overhead product stream in the cross-exchanger to produce a condensed overhead product stream, pumping a reflux portion of the condensed overhead product stream to a top of the fractionation unit, mixing the bypass portion of the rich liquefied natural gas with a balance portion of the condensed overhead product stream to produce an output stream, and vaporizing the output stream to produce a conditioned natural gas suitable for delivery to a pipeline or for commercial use.

[0014] In a second aspect, an apparatus for recovery of liquefied petroleum gas or natural gas liquids from rich liquefied natural gas may include a fractionation unit for fractionating a top feed, a primary column feed, and a vaporized secondary column feed and producing an overhead product stream and a bottom product stream, a diverter for splitting an input stream comprising substantially rich liquefied natural gas into a direct stream and a bypass stream, a cross-exchanger receiving said direct stream and heating the direct stream to produce a stream of heated rich liquefied natural gas while condensing at least a major portion of the overhead product stream by cooling the overhead product stream to produce a condensed overhead product stream, a diverter for splitting the heated rich liquefied natural gas into the primary column feed and a secondary column feed, a vaporizer for vaporizing at least a major portion of the secondary column feed and producing the vaporized secondary column feed, a pump for pumping a reflux portion of the condensed overhead product stream to a top of the fractionation unit, a mixer for mixing a bypass portion of the rich liquefied natural gas with a balance portion of the condensed overhead product stream to produce an output stream, and an output vaporizer for

vaporizing the output stream to produce a conditioned natural gas suitable for delivery to a pipeline or for commercial use.

[0015] In a third aspect, a system for recovery of liquefied petroleum gas or natural gas liquids from liquefied natural gas may include means for receiving an input stream comprising substantially rich liquefied natural gas, means for splitting the input stream into a direct stream and a bypass stream, means for heating the direct stream to produce a stream of heated rich liquefied natural gas, means for splitting the heated rich liquefied natural gas into a primary column feed and a secondary column feed, means for vaporizing at least a major portion of the secondary column feed to produce a vaporized secondary column feed, means for fractionating the top feed, the primary column feed, and the vaporized secondary column feed to produce an overhead product stream and a bottom product stream, means for condensing at least a major portion of the overhead product stream to produce a condensed overhead product stream, means for pumping a reflux portion of the condensed overhead product stream to a top of the fractionation unit, means for mixing a bypass portion of the rich liquefied natural gas with a balance portion of the condensed overhead product stream to produce an output stream, and means for vaporizing the output stream to produce a conditioned natural gas suitable for delivery to a pipeline or for commercial use.

[0016] The above and other features and advantages of the present invention, as well as the structure and operation of various embodiments of the present invention, are described in detail below with reference to the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWINGS

[0017] The accompanying drawings, which are incorporated herein and form part of the specification, illustrate various embodiments of the present invention and, together with the description, further serve to explain the principles of the invention and to enable a person skilled in the pertinent art to make and use the invention. In the drawings, like reference numbers indicate identical or functionally similar elements. A more complete appreciation of the invention and many of the attendant advantages thereof will be readily obtained as the same becomes better understood by reference to the following detailed description when considered in connection with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

[0018] FIG. 1 is a schematic diagram of a vaporization process according to a related art;

[0019] FIG. 2 is a schematic diagram of a gas conditioning process according to a first embodiment of the invention; and

[0020] FIG. 3 is a schematic diagram of an LNG handling and storage facility according to an embodiment of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0021] It would be desirable for a gas conditioning unit for recovering natural gas liquids such as C_{2+} from liquefied natural gas to exhibit relatively high ethane recovery or liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) with very low ethane recovery, in order to meet various pipeline heating value specifications. It would be further desirable for such a gas conditioning unit to be able to divert some of the incoming liquefied natural gas around the gas conditioning unit, in order to exhibit relatively high ethane recovery or very low ethane recovery. It would be

further desirable for such a gas conditioning unit to be able to mix some of the diverted rich liquefied natural gas with recovered lean liquefied natural gas from the gas conditioning unit to provide a variety of blends of heating values. It would be further desirable for such a gas conditioning unit to maintain relatively high propane plus components recovery from liquefied natural gas to meet export gas requirements. It would be further desirable for such a gas conditioning unit to vaporize or add heat to incoming streams of feed for a fractionation unit that were heated inadequately in a heat exchanger. It would be further desirable for such a gas conditioning unit to vaporize or add heat selectively to incoming streams of feed for a fractionation unit. It would be further desirable for such a gas conditioning unit to utilize conventional vaporizers, such as open rack vaporizers using seawater or cooling water, submerged combustion vaporizers using fuel gas or indirect fluid vaporizers using external heating medium, for heating requirements, since specialized equipment may not be available at every LNG terminal. Finally, it would be desirable if such a gas conditioning unit did not require the output stream of lean natural gas to be compressed, thus making it more suitable for LNG terminal applications.

[0022] In FIG. 2 is shown a gas conditioning process 100 for recovery of liquefied petroleum gas or natural gas liquids from liquefied natural gas according to a first embodiment of the invention. An input stream 102 comprised substantially of rich liquefied natural gas 104 may enter gas conditioning process 100 from a source 156 such as LNG booster pumps discharge or a pipeline. In one embodiment, input stream 102 may enter gas conditioning process 100 at a temperature in a range of -240° F. to -260° F. and a pressure range of 400 to 600 psig. In one embodiment, a pressure of input stream 102 may remain substantially constant or decrease slowly as it travels from source 156 to gas conditioning process 100. In this embodiment, no pump or compressor is present between source 156 and gas conditioning process 100 to compress the rich LNG or otherwise raise its pressure substantially. This may be useful if the particular LNG terminal at which gas conditioning process 100 is installed has no pumping equipment available to raise the pressure of input stream 102 substantially. This may also reduce the capital equipment expenditure necessary to retro-fit gas conditioning process 100 to an existing LNG terminal.

[0023] In one embodiment, a diverter 158 may split input stream 102 into a direct stream 106 and a bypass stream 132. In this embodiment, diverter 158 may be a variable diverter, such as a motorized valve applied to either the conduit carrying direct stream 106 or the conduit carrying bypass stream 132. A ratio between the amount of input stream 102 sent through the conduit carrying direct stream 106 or the conduit carrying bypass stream 132 may then be adjusted by opening or closing the appropriate valve in substantial proportion to the flow desired. Diverter 158 may thus allow gas conditioning process 100 to produce a mix of conditioned, lean LNG with unconditioned rich LNG. Such mixing will in turn allow a range of mixtures and heating values of gas to be produced, from nearly pure rich LNG to nearly pure lean LNG. Gas conditioning process 100 may thus be flexible in the heating values of gases it produces relative to conventional LNG vaporization systems that send all of the rich LNG through the process.

[0024] A cross-exchanger 108 may receive direct stream 106 from diverter 158. In several embodiments, cross-exchanger 108 may be an opposite-flow heat exchanger or a

cross-flow heat exchanger. In one embodiment, a pressure of direct stream 106 remains substantially constant or decreases slowly as it travels from diverter 158 to cross-exchanger 108. In this embodiment, no pump or compressor is present between diverter 158 and cross-exchanger 108 to compress direct stream 106 or otherwise raise its pressure substantially.

[0025] In one embodiment, direct stream 106 of input stream 102 may flow through cross-exchanger 108. Cross-exchanger 108 may heat direct stream 106 to produce a stream of heated rich liquefied natural gas 110. In one embodiment, cross-exchanger 108 heats direct stream 106 of input stream 102 to a temperature in a range of -115° F. to -140° F. In one embodiment, a diverter 146 may split heated rich liquefied natural gas 110 into two streams: a primary column feed 112 and a secondary column feed 114. In another embodiment, a diverter 146 may split heated rich liquefied natural gas 110 into three streams: a primary column feed 112 and a secondary column feed 114, and an optional bypass stream 163 which would connect to a mixer 160.

[0026] Gas conditioning process 100 may fractionate propane and heavier compounds contained in the rich LNG and recover a large portion of the ethane. Gas conditioning process 100 may include a fractionation unit 120 for this purpose. In one embodiment, fractionation unit 120 may be demethanizer. In another embodiment, fractionation unit 120 may be a distillation unit. In several embodiments, fractionation unit 120 may be a trayed column having approximately thirty trays, a packed column, or a combination of a packed and a trayed column. In one embodiment, fractionation unit 120 may fractionate natural gas liquid containing ethane, propane and heavier components or liquefied petroleum gas containing propane and heavier components from methane and lighter components in the rich LNG.

[0027] In one embodiment, fractionation unit 120 may have three feed streams and two product streams. A top feed stream, i.e. top feed 118, may be a reflux stream and be substantially all liquid. A middle feed stream, i.e. primary column feed 112, may be a primary feed stream. In one embodiment, primary column feed 112 may be comprised substantially of liquid. A bottom feed stream, i.e. vaporized secondary column feed 116, may be a secondary feed stream. In one embodiment, vaporized secondary column feed 116 may be substantially pre-heated.

[0028] In one embodiment, fractionation unit 120 fractionates natural gas liquid containing ethane, propane and heavier components from methane and lighter components in top feed 118, primary column feed 112, and vaporized secondary column feed 116 to produce an overhead product stream 122 and a bottom product stream 124. Overhead product stream 122 may contain mostly methane and lighter components. In one embodiment, overhead product stream 122 may be comprised substantially of vapor. In another embodiment, overhead product stream 122 may be mostly methane. In one embodiment, overhead product stream 122 may exit fractionation unit 120 at a temperature in a range of -80° F. to -130° F.

[0029] In one embodiment, the NGL stream (i.e. bottom product stream 124) may contain mostly ethane, propane and heavier components. In one embodiment, bottom product stream 124 may be comprised substantially of natural gas liquids, such as C_{2+} hydrocarbons. In one embodiment, bottom product stream 124 may be a mixture of ethane, propane and heavier components fractionated from the rich LNG. In one embodiment, bottom product stream 124 may exit frac-

tionation unit 120 at a temperature in a range of 55° F. to 1200° F. In another embodiment, bottom product stream 124 may be controlled by heat input to fractionation unit 120 to meet natural gas liquid pipeline specifications.

[0030] Primary column feed 112 may enter fractionation unit 120 directly at a temperature in a range of -115° F. to -140° F. Secondary column feed 114, on the other hand, may pass through a vaporizer 140 and be preheated to a temperature in a range of 30° F. to 60° F. before entering fractionation unit 120. In one embodiment, vaporizer 140 may vaporize at least a major portion of secondary column feed 114 and produce vaporized secondary column feed 116. In several embodiments, a heat source of vaporizer 140 may be seawater or cooling water in the case of an open rack vaporizer, fuel gas in the case of a submerged combustion vaporizer, or an external heating medium in the case of an intermediate fluid vaporizer.

[0031] Cross-exchanger 108 may condense at least a major portion of overhead product stream 122 into lean LNG as well as preheat direct stream 106. Cross-exchanger 108 may condense overhead product stream 122 by cooling overhead product stream 122 to produce a condensed overhead product stream 126. In one embodiment, cross-exchanger 108 may cool overhead product stream 122 by rejecting heat from overhead product stream 122 to direct stream 106. In one embodiment, cross-exchanger 108 cools overhead product stream 122 to a temperature in a range of -120° F. to -145° F.

[0032] In one embodiment, cross-exchanger 108 may heat direct stream 106 with heat absorbed from overhead product stream 122. Preheating may reduce a reboiler duty of fractionation unit 120 (i.e., heating medium system capacity) and vaporizer 140 heat duty.

[0033] Part of the lean LNG coming from the cross-exchanger 108 may be returned to fractionation unit 120 as a reflux stream by a reflux pump 148. In particular, pump 148 may pump a reflux portion 128 of condensed overhead product stream 126 to a top 130 of fractionation unit 120 as top feed 118. In one embodiment, reflux portion 128 may be comprised substantially of liquid. The reflux stream may increase propane recovery and reduce the amount of ethane removed in fractionation unit 120. The remaining lean LNG stream may be mixed with the bypass stream (rich LNG) 132 and an optional bypass stream 163 and flow to pumping and vaporizing systems.

[0034] In one embodiment, bypass portion 132 of input stream 102 from LNG booster pumps may bypass cross-exchanger 108 as a bypass stream and mix with lean LNG coming from fractionation unit 120. The combined stream may then flow to pumping 164 and vaporizing 162 systems. In particular, in one embodiment, a mixer 160 may mix a bypass portion 132 of rich liquefied natural gas 104 and an optional bypass stream 163 from split 146 with a balance portion 134 of condensed overhead product stream 122 to produce an output stream 136. An output vaporizer 162 may vaporize output stream 136 to produce a conditioned natural gas 138 suitable for delivery to a pipeline or for commercial use.

[0035] In one embodiment, gas conditioning process 100 may include a re-boiler 142 adding heat to a bottom re-boiler stream 144 from fractionation unit 120 and re-injecting bottom re-boiler stream 144 into fractionation unit 120. In one embodiment, re-boiler 142 may be a submerged combustion vaporizer.

[0036] The NGL from fractionation unit 120 may be pumped by two pumps (a booster pump 150 and a high

pressure pump **152**) to NGL pipeline pressure and enter the NGL pipeline **154**. Booster pump **150** may be used to provide the net positive suction head (NPSH) required by high pressure pump **152**.

[0037] In a second embodiment, a method **100** for recovery of liquefied petroleum gas or natural gas liquids from liquefied natural gas may include the steps of receiving an input stream comprising substantially rich liquefied natural gas **104**, heating a direct stream **106** of input stream **102** in a cross-exchanger **108** to produce a stream of heated rich liquefied natural gas **110**, splitting heated rich liquefied natural gas **110** into a primary column feed **112**, optional bypass stream **163** and a secondary column feed **114**, vaporizing at least a major portion of secondary column feed **114** in a vaporizer **140** to produce a vaporized secondary column feed **116**, fractionating a top feed **118**, primary column feed **112**, and vaporized secondary column feed **116** in a fractionation unit **120** to produce an overhead product stream **122** and a bottom product stream **124**, condensing at least a major portion of overhead product stream **122** by cooling overhead product stream **122** in cross-exchanger **108** to produce a condensed overhead product stream **126**, pumping a reflux portion **128** of condensed overhead product stream **126** to a top **130** of fractionation unit **120**, mixing a bypass portion **132** of input stream **102** and optional bypass stream **163** with a balance portion **134** of condensed overhead product stream **122** to produce an output stream **136**, vaporizing output stream **136** to produce a conditioned natural gas **138** suitable for delivery to a pipeline or for commercial use.

[0038] In FIG. **3** is shown an LNG handling and storage facility **300** according to third embodiment of the invention. LNG handling and storage facility **300** may include an incoming stream of LNG **310**, a ship vapor return blower **312**, LNG storage and send out pumps **314**, a boil off gas compression and condensation unit **316**, LNG booster pumps **318**, LNG vaporizers **320**, gas conditioning process **322** for recovery of liquefied petroleum gas or natural gas liquids from liquefied natural gas, and an outgoing stream of mixed NGL to a natural gas pipeline **326**.

[0039] The foregoing has described the principles, embodiments, and modes of operation of the present invention. However, the invention should not be construed as being limited to the particular embodiments described above, as they should be regarded as being illustrative and not restrictive. It should be appreciated that variations may be made in those embodiments by those skilled in the art without departing from the scope of the present invention.

[0040] While the invention has been described in detail above, the invention is not intended to be limited to the specific embodiments as described. It is evident that those skilled in the art may now make numerous uses and modifications of and departures from the specific embodiments described herein without departing from the inventive concepts.

[0041] While various embodiments of the present invention have been described above, they should be understood to have been presented by way of examples only, and not limitation. Thus, the breadth and scope of the present invention should not be limited by the above described embodiments.

[0042] Obviously, numerous modifications and variations of the present invention are possible in light of the above teachings. It is therefore to be understood that the invention may be practiced otherwise than as specifically described herein.

What is claimed is:

1. A method for recovery of liquefied petroleum gas or natural gas liquids from liquefied natural gas, the method comprising: receiving an input stream comprising substantially rich liquefied natural gas;
 - splitting the input stream into a direct stream and a bypass stream;
 - heating said direct stream in a cross-exchanger to produce a stream of heated rich liquefied natural gas;
 - splitting said heated rich liquefied natural gas into a primary column feed and a secondary column feed;
 - vaporizing at least a major portion of said secondary column feed in a vaporizer to produce a vaporized secondary column feed;
 - fractionating a top feed, said primary column feed, and said vaporized secondary column feed in a fractionation unit to produce an overhead product stream and a bottom product stream;
 - condensing at least a major portion of said overhead product stream by cooling said overhead product stream in said cross-exchanger to produce a condensed overhead product stream;
 - pumping a reflux portion of said condensed overhead product stream to a top of said fractionation unit as said top feed;
 - mixing said bypass stream with a balance portion of said condensed overhead product stream to produce an output stream; and
 - vaporizing said output stream to produce a conditioned natural gas suitable for delivery to a pipeline or for commercial use.
2. The method of claim **1**, comprising further diverting a portion of said heated rich liquefied natural gas into an optional bypass stream; and mixing said optional bypass stream with said balance portion of said condensed overhead product stream to produce said output stream.
3. The method of claim **1**, wherein said natural gas liquids comprise C₂₊ hydrocarbons.
4. The method of claim **1**, wherein said input stream is at a temperature in a range of -240° F. to -260° F.
5. The method of claim **1**, wherein said cross-exchanger heats said direct stream of said input stream to a temperature in a range of -115° F. to -140° F.
6. The method of claim **1**, wherein said vaporizer heats said secondary column feed to a temperature in a range of 30° F. to 60° F.
7. The method of claim **1**, wherein said cross-exchanger cools said overhead product stream to a temperature in a range of -120° F. to -145° F.
8. The method of claim **1**, wherein said reflux portion is comprised substantially of liquid.
9. The method of claim **1**, wherein said primary column feed is comprised substantially of liquid.
10. The method of claim **1**, wherein said vaporized secondary column feed is substantially pre-heated.
11. The method of claim **1**, wherein said overhead product stream is comprised substantially of vapor.
12. The method of claim **1**, wherein said bottom product stream is comprised substantially of natural gas liquids.
13. The method of claim **1**, wherein said overhead product stream exits said fractionation unit at a temperature in a range of -80° F. to -130° F.

14. The method of claim 1, wherein said bottom product stream exits said fractionation unit at a temperature in a range of 50° F. to 120° F.

15. The method of claim 1, wherein said direct stream of said input stream is heated by absorbing heat from said overhead product stream.

16. The method of claim 1, wherein said overhead product stream is condensed by rejecting heat to said direct stream of said input stream.

17. An apparatus for recovery of liquefied petroleum gas or natural gas liquids from liquefied natural gas, comprising:

a fractionation unit for fractionating a top feed, a primary column feed, and a vaporized secondary column feed and producing an overhead product stream and a bottom product stream;

a diverter for splitting an input stream comprising substantially rich liquefied natural gas into a direct stream and a bypass stream;

a cross-exchanger receiving said direct stream and heating said direct stream to produce a stream of heated rich liquefied natural gas while condensing at least a major portion of said overhead product stream to produce a condensed overhead product stream;

a diverter for splitting said heated rich liquefied natural gas into said primary column feed, optional bypass stream and a secondary column feed;

a vaporizer for vaporizing at least a major portion of said secondary column feed and producing said vaporized secondary column feed;

a pump for pumping a reflux portion of said condensed overhead product stream to a top of said fractionation unit as said top feed;

a mixer for mixing a bypass portion of said rich liquefied natural gas and optional bypass stream with a balance portion of said overhead product stream to produce an output stream;

an output vaporizer for vaporizing said output stream to produce a conditioned natural gas suitable for delivery to a pipeline or for commercial use.

18. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein:

said diverter diverts a portion of said heated rich liquefied natural gas into an optional bypass stream; and

said mixer mixes said optional bypass stream with said balance portion of said overhead product stream to produce an output stream.

19. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein said fractionation unit is selected from the group consisting of:

a trayed column having approximately thirty trays,

a packed column, and

a combination of said packed and said trayed column.

20. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein said fractionation unit fractionates ethane, propane and heavier components

from methane and lighter components in said top feed, said primary column feed, and said vaporized secondary column feed.

21. The apparatus of claim 17, comprising further a reboiler adding heat to a bottom re-boil stream from said fractionation unit and re-injecting said bottom re-boil stream into said fractionation unit.

22. The apparatus of claim 21, wherein said re-boiler comprises a submerged combustion vaporizer.

23. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein a heat source of said vaporizer is selected from the group consisting of:

sea-water,

cooling water for open rack vaporizers,

fuel gas for submerged combustion vaporizers, and

indirect heating fluid for indirect fluid vaporizers.

24. A system for recovery of liquefied petroleum gas or natural gas liquids from liquefied natural gas, comprising: means for receiving an input stream comprising substantially rich liquefied natural gas;

means for splitting the input stream into a direct stream and a bypass stream;

means for heating a direct stream of said input stream to produce a stream of heated rich liquefied natural gas;

means for splitting said heated rich liquefied natural gas into a primary column feed and a secondary column feed;

means for vaporizing at least a major portion of said secondary column feed to produce a vaporized secondary column feed;

means for fractionating a top feed, said primary column feed, and said vaporized secondary column feed to produce an overhead product stream and a bottom product stream;

means for condensing at least a major portion of said overhead product stream to produce a condensed overhead product stream;

means for pumping a reflux portion of said condensed overhead product stream to a top of said fractionation unit as said top feed;

means for mixing a bypass portion of said rich liquefied natural gas with a balance portion of said condensed overhead product stream to produce an output stream;

means for vaporizing said output stream to produce a conditioned natural gas suitable for delivery to a pipeline or for commercial use.

25. The system of claim 24, comprising further:

means for diverting a portion of said heated rich liquefied natural gas into an optional bypass stream; and

means for mixing said optional bypass stream with said balance portion of said condensed overhead product stream-to produce said output stream.

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