

# NASA TECH BRIEF

## Marshall Space Flight Center



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### Temperature-Stable Gunn-Diode Oscillator

#### The problem:

Many solid-state oscillators are subject to frequency shifts in response to temperature changes. This problem can be overcome with automatic-frequency-control (AFC) crystal oscillators. However, the crystal-controlled devices are relatively expensive.

#### The solution:

An oscillator consisting of a Gunn diode embedded in a coaxial circuit has excellent temperature stability and low fabrication costs.

#### How it's done:

In the illustrated oscillator the low impedance of a Gunn diode is transformed through a section of radial line and low-impedance coaxial cable. This results in an even lower impedance and raises the oscillator loaded Q factor to 150. A section of high-impedance coaxial cable runs the length of the device.

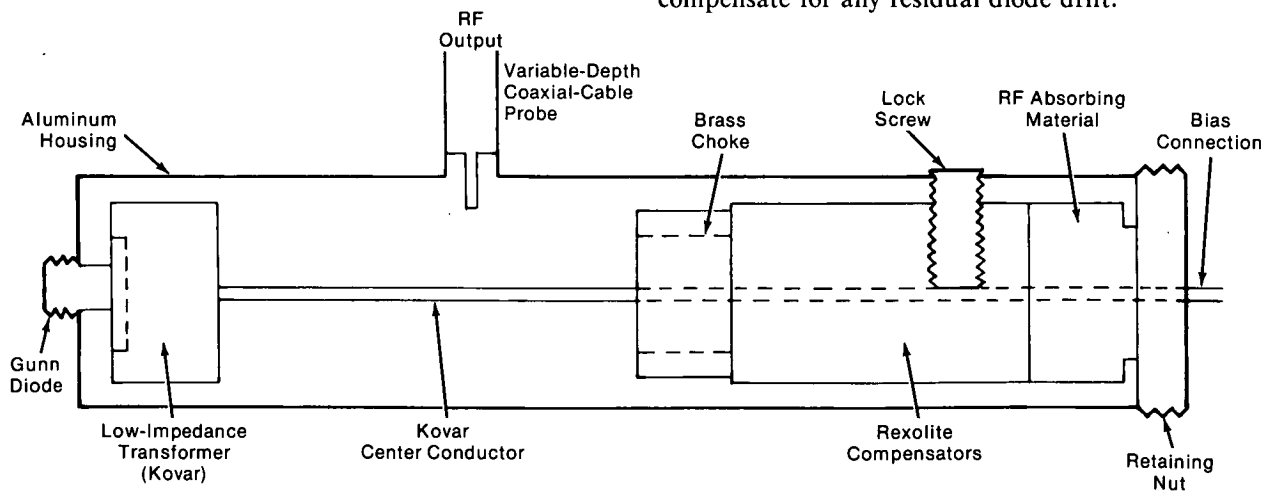
Only the transformer and center conductor need to be made from a low-thermal-expansion material, thus reducing manufacturing costs. Initial results indicate

that the oscillator has a stability of 1 part in  $10^4$  over a range of  $30^\circ\text{C}$  at 9.5 GHz.

An RF cavity, which includes the transformer and a section of the coaxial cable, is terminated by a choke short. The cavity length is one-half the oscillator wavelength ( $\lambda/2$ ), and a variable-depth coaxial-cable probe at the cavity midpoint serves as the RF output.

The choke is a hollow brass piece with an exterior length equal to  $\lambda/4$  in air and an interior length equal to  $\lambda/4$  in rexolite. The choke is followed by a block of rexolite that is firmly attached to the center conductor cable at a single point. A section of RF absorbing material further reduces any leakage out of the bias port.

As the temperature rises the transformer and the conductor cable expand. However, the section of rexolite, although smaller than the cavity length, also expands an equal amount. The thickness of rexolite (a material with a high coefficient of thermal expansion  $= 90 \times 10^{-6}/^\circ\text{C}$ ) expands in a direction opposite to the cable-and-transformer expansion and maintains a constant cavity length. It may also be designed to compensate for any residual diode drift.



(continued overleaf)

**Note:**

Requests for further information may be made in writing to:

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Marshall Space Flight Center  
Code AT01  
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**Patent status:**

Inquiries concerning rights for the commercial use of this invention should be addressed to:

Patent Counsel  
Marshall Space Flight Center  
Code CC01  
Marshall Space Flight Center, Alabama 35812

Source: J. E. Dengenford, L. E. Dickens,  
D. W. Maki, and B. A. Newman of  
Westinghouse Electric Corp.  
(MFS-23242)