housing means for rotation about a substantially common axis;

said first and second backwash arm means each having a flow passageway therethrough and means thereon sealingly cooperating with the opposite ends of the individual filter units for permitting the individual filter units to solely communicate with the passageways formed in said first and second backwash arm means; and

inlet and outlet pipes located exteriorly of said housing means and connected to said first and second backwash arm means, respectively, said inlet pipe being adapted to communicate with an external source of said backwash fluid, whereby the backwash fluid flows through said first backwash arm means into the filter element and then radially outwardly through the cylindrical pervious wall of the filter element for dislodging the solid material deposited thereon, the backwash liquid and the solid material then being discharged through said second backwash arm means.

3. A filter assembly according to claim 2, further including drive means disposed exteriorly of said housing means and connected to said first and second backwash arm means for causing synchronous rotation thereof.

4. A filter assembly according to claim 3, wherein said housing means includes an elongated tubular central portion and a pair of opposite end portions, means pivotably mounting one of said end portions to said central portion for permitting swinging movement of said one end portion into an open position, said first and second backwash arm means each being rotatably mounted on a corresponding one of said end portions, and said drive means including disconnectible coupling means which are automatically disconnected in response to swinging movement of said one end portion toward said open position.

5. A filter assembly according to claim 4, wherein said drive means includes elongated shaft means disposed exteriorly of and extending longitudinally of said housing means, said disconnectible coupling means being disposed intermediate said elongated shaft means substantially at the interface between said one end portion and the adjacent end of said central housing portion.

6. A filter assembly according to claim 2, wherein each of said filter units includes a diffuser means disposed centrally within and extending longitudinally along the axis of the filter element, said diffuser means including a plurality of axially spaced, progressively enlarging, conical diffuser members for causing the backwash fluid to be substantially uniformly radially deflected outwardly through the impervious walls of said filter element over substantially the complete axial length thereof.

7. A filter assembly according to claim 2, further including means defining a source of an external backwash fluid separate from the filtrate contained within said filter assembly, said source of backwash fluid being connected to said inlet pipe.

8. A filter assembly according to claim 2, further including valve means associated with said outlet pipe for controlling flow therethrough, said valve means being normally closed except when a backwashing operation is being performed.

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