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INVENTION

Patents of the Week

A new "character recognition" device that reads handwritten figures by curve tracing has a circuit suitable for use in other reading devices.

➤ A MACHINE that automatically reads handwritten figures was among one of four patents granted and assigned to Control Data Corporation, Minneapolis, by the U.S. Patent Office.

A prototype of the figure-reading machine is on display at the Rabinow Engineering Company, Inc., Rockville, Md. Arthur W. Holt of Silver Spring, Md., was awarded patent 3,142,818 for the "character recognition" device using curve tracing.

One of the circuits used in this reading machine was devised by James D. Hill of Takoma Park, Md., for which he earned patent 3,142,824. It is a universal type of circuit suitable for use in other kinds of reading machines.

Mr. Jacob Rabinow, president of Rabinow Engineering Company, Inc., was granted patent 3,142,761 for his device to align the scanner of a reading machine to the center of the line of print.

Mr. Rabinow, with Laurence M. Andrews and William Fischer, both of Silver Spring, also earned patent 3,142,224 for an optical scanning projection system. This method is now in use in several of the reading machines developed by the Rockville firm.

Method for Making Diamonds

A method for making artificial diamonds of any desired size from a seed crystal was granted patent 3,142,539. The system was developed out of technical interest as a scientific endeavor, and is not now used commercially.

John A. Brinkman and Herman M. Dieckamp, both of Canoga Park, Calif., and Charles J. Meehan of Reseda, Calif., assigned rights to North American Aviation, Inc.

Brake Using Turbo Action

A brake for large airplanes landing at high speeds that uses turbo action to help slow the aircraft earned patent 3,142,360 for Ladislav Kelemen of Akron, Ohio, who assigned rights to the Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company, Akron.

Two models of the turbo-brake are now being tested. The new concept takes advantage of the large quantities of air rushing past the tires as an airplane lands. Turbine-like blades are turned by this air in a direction counter to the tire's rotation to slow the airplane.

When the plane's speed is sufficiently low, normal brakes will also be used.

Other Interesting Patents

A method for controlling the flow of air next to the wing in swept-wing airplanes,

called boundary layer control, or BLC. Henry H. W. Quenzler of Seattle, Wash., assigned rights to patent 3,142,457 to the Boeing Company, also of Seattle.

Two devices to be used with gyroscopes, particularly the so-called Draper gyroscope, the applications of which are being held secret. Ernest Blaney Dane Jr. of Belmont, Mass., assigned rights to patents 3,142,182 and 3,142,183 to Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge.

A process for polymerizing propylene plastics, now in commercial use, in which a heavy metal compound and a metal alkyl compound are combined as catalysts. Nobel Prize winner Giulio Natta of Milan, Piero Pino of Pisa, and Giorgio Mazzanti of Milan, all of Italy, assigned rights to patent 3,141,872 to Montecatini Societa Generale per l'Industria Mineraria e Chimica, Milan.

A stair-climbing wheelchair, for which Gourley H. Green of Scarborough, Ontario, Canada, was awarded patent 3,142,351.

Two of seven patents assigned to Polaroid Corporation, Cambridge, Mass., were earned by Dr. Edwin H. Land, numbers 3,142,243 and 3,142,566.

• Science News Letter, 86:98 Aug. 15, 1964

Nature Note**The Gila Monster**

➤ THE POISONOUS Gila monster, *Heterodermus suspectum*, is the largest lizard native to the United States, and is the only poisonous lizard native to this country.

A resident of the Arizona desert, it is 20 to 24 inches in length when full grown and is fierce in appearance, although actually nonaggressive in its habits.

Covered with a mosaic pattern of blackish-brown and pinkish-orange "beads," the Gila monster can easily be distinguished from other lizards. It lives in the sahuaro cactus forests and ventures abroad at dusk, looking for food. The staples of its diet are the eggs of birds and snakes.

The monster is a slow-moving clumsy beast with a stocky head, thick body and short thick tail.

When left alone, it lumbers along peacefully, dragging its body on the ground, although it will attack if provoked.

When it attacks, it will snap viciously and hang on like a bulldog, releasing venom and saliva into the bite. Its grip is tenacious, and cannot be broken without the aid of an instrument.

The Gila monster's poison attacks the nervous system and induces paralysis, but is not usually fatal to man.

• Science News Letter, 86:98 Aug. 15, 1964