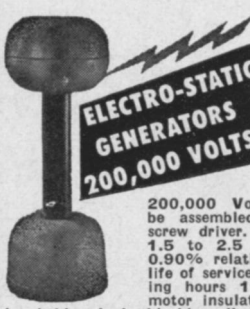


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INVENTION

Patents of the Week

Patents for elements americium and curium are being granted, thus protecting the public from the possibility that someone may claim the elements as his own—By Ann Ewing

► **NOBELIST** Dr. Glenn T. Seaborg, chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, was granted a patent on the man-made element 95, americium, the first ever awarded for an element.

On Dec. 15 Dr. Seaborg will receive a companion patent for element 96, curium. Both patents were the subject of a court battle in which Dr. Seaborg's right to be awarded the patents was upheld by the U.S. Court of Customs and Patent Appeals, overruling the Patent Office in its refusal to grant them.

Neither of the synthetic elements has any known practical use, even though producing and separating them was of great scientific interest. Dr. Seaborg assigned patent rights to the Government through the Atomic Energy Commission.

The patents were applied for in 1946, two years after the synthetic elements were isolated by Dr. Seaborg and his collaborators at the University of California. They protect the public from the possibility that someone might claim the elements and force payment of royalties.

Identification of element 95 actually followed identification of element 96, which was produced by bombardment of plutonium 239 with helium ions in a cyclotron. Americium was made by bombarding plutonium 239 with neutrons in a nuclear reactor.

Patent 3,156,523 covers not only the element itself but also its isotopes and methods of producing and purifying element 95. Dr. Seaborg holds some 40 other patents and has several more pending. He shared the 1951 Nobel Prize in Chemistry with Dr. E. M. McMillan of the University of California, for his work with the transuranium elements.

Treatment for Wool

A method was patented for treating wool to make it more resistant to oxidation such as occurs in textile mills during bleaching, shrinkproofing or other finishing processes, in use through action of light and air, or in laundering.

Nathan H. Koenig of Berkeley, Calif., assigned rights to patent 3,156,522 to the Government through the Secretary of Agriculture. The method consists in modifying the wool chemically by treating it with a mixture of an organic isocyanate and epichlorohydrin.

Although the properties of the modified wool show beyond doubt that actual chemical combination between the isocyanate and epichlorohydrin has taken place, the way in which the chemicals are united with wool is not known.

The process may be used with wool in

the form of fibers, threads, yarns, knitted or woven goods, whether they are all wool or blends with other textile fibers and whether white or colored.

Toy from A Beer Can

Toys can now be made by snapping simple end brackets with wheels onto the rims of empty beer or soft drink cans.

The can with wheels, which can be used as a toy train, missile of wagon, earned patent 3,154,882 for Edgar L. La Bossiere, Los Angeles, Calif.

The toy could be used by food or beverage manufacturers as an advertising promotion gimmick, Mr. La Bossiere said. Patent rights were assigned to the Garal Manufacturing Corporation, Lynwood, Calif.

Other Patents Issued

A liquid massage machine for soothing a horse's sore legs earned patent 3,155,072 for Walter F. Owens, Detroit, Mich. The device, which has four boot-like containers to fit on each of the horse's legs, provides a liquid bath to take the kinks out of strained tendons and muscles.

A shell-like building construction that can resist everything from vandals to atomic blasts earned patent 3,154,888 for Phillip Graham, Pittsburgh, Pa. The building, which is made of cement and plastic materials, can be quickly and easily put together from curved pre-cast panel sections.

A secondary escape hatch for fallout shelters that can be used in case the main exit is blocked earned patent 3,155,057 for Richard Donald Ayres, Baltimore, Md. Patent rights were assigned to the Raymar Construction Co., Inc., Baltimore.

A method and machine for automatically guiding an aircraft from one point to another over long distances earned patent 3,155,969 for James Byron Jones, Stamford, Conn. Patent rights were assigned to Good-year Aerospace Corporation.

• Science News Letter, 86:350 November 28, 1964

Do You Know?

A transistorized "fetal electrocardiograph" filters out all other sounds to detect the minute heartbeat of an *unborn baby*—a 10-millionth of a volt.

An "opto-kinetic stimulator," a rotating chair inside a sphere around which strips of light are flashed, is aiding research into the connection between eye stimulation and *motion sickness*.

• Science News Letter, 86:350 November 28, 1964