

INVENTION

Current U. S. Patents

A lock that 'recognizes' the voice pattern of a particular person and responds by unlocking the door may bypass the need for using keys—By William McCann

► A VOICE-OPERATED LOCK that answers to a spoken word or phrase by unlocking the door received a patent. The lock is designed to unlock to a specific command spoken by a specific person. This personalized type of lock would bypass the need for carrying and using keys, which can easily get lost or stolen, inventor Dr. Irving H. Sher, Philadelphia, Pa., said.

A person first presses a tiny button on the doorknob to turn on the current, then he speaks into a microphone set in the door.

A simple device, called a "Sceptron", analyzes the spoken sounds into their component parts.

This system is so exacting that not even a good voice imitation could fool it, Dr. Sher said. In addition, it is geared to shut down if it hears too much noise. Also, the system can be set so that more than one person of the household can unlock the door.

The voice-controlled lock earned patent 3,184,937 from the U.S. Patent Office in Washington, D.C. Patent rights were assigned to the Institute for Scientific Information, Philadelphia.

Suction Gun

An underwater "gun" that sucks up tiny fish or other small aquatic life has received a patent.

When a skin diver pulls the trigger of the gun, a rubber tube pulls the piston to create a strong water current, thus sucking the fish into the gun's chamber. The gun has a series of chambers so that a number of live specimens can be caught in one underwater trip.

The gun earned patent 3,184,878 for David Louis Senne, La Habra, Calif., and patent rights were assigned to the W. J. Voit Rubber Corp., Santa Ana.

Boatcase

An angler can now store his fishing equipment in a lightweight aluminum boat, then fold the boat up like a suitcase and carry the whole thing to the lake.

The combination collapsible boat and carrying case earned patent 3,184,768 for John E. Thomson, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Other Interesting Patents

A method of using bacteria to get petroleum out of underground deposits received a patent. Donald O. Hiltzman, Bartlesville, Okla., earned patent 3,185,216 and patent rights were assigned to Phillips Petroleum Company, Bartlesville.

A tiny turf-repairing tool to help golfers

get rid of "ball scars" on the putting greens received a patent. The tool, which is kept in a slot on the side of the putter, can be used to smooth out the turf when a golfer comes upon a dent in the green that may interfere with his putt. Leonard H. Klyman, Jacksonville, N.C., was awarded patent 3,185,483 for the invention.

For a list of registered patent attorneys and agents and other Patent Office information, write the Commissioner of Patents, Washington, D.C., or call 202-967-4058 for specific information.

• Science News Letter, 87:381 June 12, 1965

Nature Note

The Chigger

► HERE COME those hot summer months again, and here come the chiggers, those tiny red pests whose bites are as hot as fire.

Members of the Arachnida class of animals, the chiggers or "red bugs" are related to a lot of other pests—scorpions, spiders, and mites. These creatures are not classed with insects, scientists point out. The arachnids have eight legs, instead of the six characteristic of insects; and their eyes are simple primitive organs called ocelli, rather than large compound eyes of insects.

The true chigger, *Trombicula irritans*, is a minute, fuzzy, rusty-red mite. Sometimes called the United States jigger, it is quite plentiful in the southern part of the U.S., but is also widely distributed throughout North America from Canada to central Mexico.

These creatures prefer grassy or weedy fields, but also are at home in low damp wooded areas, among berry patches or orchards, to say nothing of well traveled lawns or parks where summer hikers, picnickers and campers walk or sit with bare legs and arms inviting the small pests.

Once the creatures have climbed aboard a human being or an animal, they scurry for preferred location where clothing fits tightly or where the flesh is thin, tender or wrinkled.

Here the chigger feasts on its victim by inserting two pairs of grasping mouth pieces and a tiny forked claw into the skin through pores or hair follicles. Then it injects a fluid which dissolves tissues and which causes reddish welts to appear on the victim's skin, followed by swelling, itching and in some cases fever.

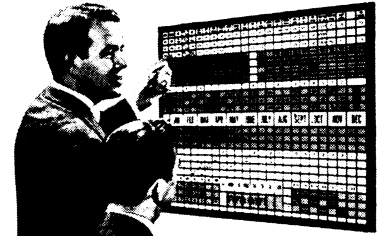
The season for this tiny pest begins in May and lasts through September or the time of the first frost.

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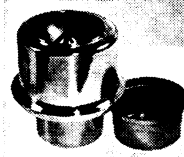
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