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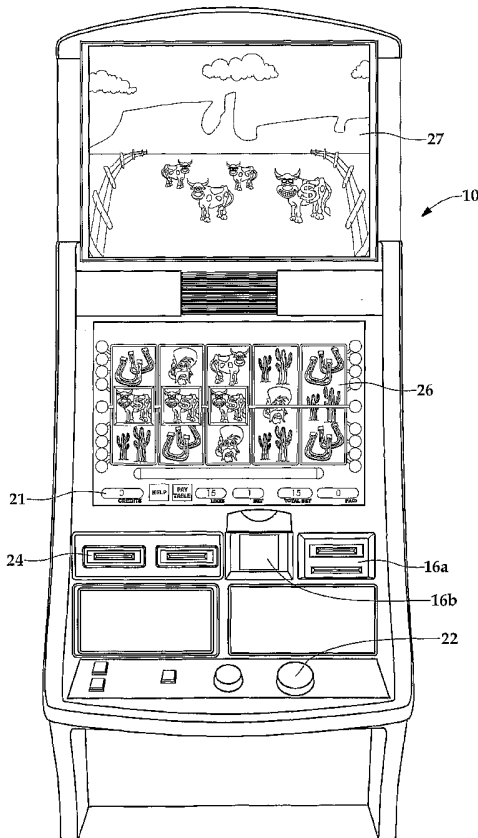
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[Continued on next page]

(54) Title: WAGERING GAME HAVING A SIMULATED WORLD-BUILDING FEATURE FOR PAYOFFS

(57) Abstract: A gaming terminal and a method of playing at the gaming terminal. The gaming terminal has a basic wagering game and a bonus game. The bonus game simulates the building of a world and provides bonus awards based on an accumulation of assets by the simulated world. In response to a player terminating a gaming session, the accumulated assets are selectively stored by the player in a memory device and can be used in subsequent gaming sessions. Additionally, the player can choose to save the status of the gaming session and return at a later time to the same status as the first gaming session.



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WAGERING GAME HAVING A SIMULATED WORLD-BUILDING FEATURE FOR PAYOFFS

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[001] The present invention relates generally to gaming terminals and, more particularly, to a gaming terminal having a simulated world-building game whereby assets associated with the simulated world can be accumulated and saved at the gaming terminal and can be restored at a subsequent gaming session.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[002] Gaming machines, such as slot machines, video poker machines, and the like, have been a cornerstone of the gaming industry for several years. Generally, the popularity of such machines with players is dependent on the likelihood (or perceived likelihood) of winning money at the machine and the intrinsic entertainment value of the machine relative to other available gaming options. Where the available gaming options include a number of competing machines and the expectation of winning each machine is roughly the same (or believed to be the same), players are most likely to be attracted to the most entertaining and exciting of the machines.

[003] Consequently, shrewd operators strive to employ the most entertaining and exciting machines available because such machines attract frequent play and, hence, increase profitability to the operator. In the competitive gaming machine industry, there is a continuing need for gaming machine manufacturers to produce new types of games, or enhancements to existing games, which will attract frequent play by enhancing the entertainment value and excitement associated with the game.

[004] One concept that has been successfully employed to enhance the entertainment value of a game is that of a "bonus" game which may be played in conjunction with a "basic" game. The bonus game may comprise any type of game, either similar to or completely different from the basic game, and is entered upon the occurrence of a selected event or outcome of the basic game. Such a bonus game produces a significantly higher level of player excitement than the basic game because it provides a greater expectation of winning than the basic game.

[005] Another concept that has been employed is the use of a progressive jackpot. In the gaming industry, a "progressive" involves collecting coin-in data from

participating gaming device(s) (e.g., slot machines), contributing a percentage of that coin-in data to a jackpot amount, and awarding that jackpot amount to a player upon the occurrence of a certain jackpot-won event. The percentage of the coin-in is determined prior to any result being achieved and is independent of any result. A jackpot-won event typically occurs when a "progressive winning position" is achieved at a participating gaming device. If the gaming device is a slot machine, a progressive winning position may, for example, correspond to alignment of progressive jackpot reel symbols along a certain payline. The initial progressive jackpot is a predetermined minimum amount. That jackpot amount, however, progressively increases as players continue to play the gaming machine without winning the jackpot. Further, when several gaming machines are linked together such that several players at several gaming machines compete for the same jackpot, the jackpot progressively increases at a much faster rate, which leads to further player excitement.

[006] In current basic games, bonus games, and progressive games, the player is provided with little incentive to return to the game at a later time. Once the player chooses to stop playing the game in that round, the player is immediately awarded any credits that are remaining and also loses assets that have been accumulated, but not yet awarded. For example, in some games, the bonus game consists of the player collecting assets and when a certain number or combination of assets is accumulated, the player wins an award. However, should the player choose to leave the game prior to winning the award, the player loses all of the assets accumulated. This can cause player frustration and does not provide the player with any incentive to return to the game.

[007] Such a system also encourages "vulturing," in which the "vulturing" player waits for a person who is close to winning an award to leave the gaming machine prior to the winning of the award. The "vulturing" player then begins to play the machine, and may quickly win the award without investing much time into the game. This is also frustrating for other players.

[008] Thus, there is a need to allow a player to accumulate assets on gaming terminals and to have those assets restored to them should the player return to the game at a later time. This way, should a player choose to leave a game, anything the player has accumulated during the game goes with them and is restored at a later time when the player returns to the game. This alleviates the player frustration at losing

assets that they have accumulated and also provides the player with an incentive to return to the game at a later date.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[009] According to one embodiment of the present invention, the needs mentioned above are met by a gaming terminal having a basic wagering game and a bonus game. In this embodiment, the basic wagering game includes a plurality of symbols that indicate a randomly selected outcome of the wagering game. The bonus game simulates the operation of a world and provides bonus awards based on an accumulation of assets associated with the simulated world. In response to a player terminating a gaming session, the accumulated assets are selectively stored by the player in a memory device and can be used in subsequent gaming sessions.

[010] According to another embodiment of the invention, a method of playing a wagering game is disclosed. The method includes a basic game and a bonus game played at a gaming terminal. A bonus-game outcome is achieved in the basic game. The bonus game simulates an operation of a world and provides a bonus award based on assets associated with the simulated world. Upon receiving a first bonus-game outcome, a player accumulates at least one of the assets. Upon receiving a second bonus-game outcome, a player can exchange one or more assets for a payout. In response to receiving inputs from a player prior to completing a gaming session, the status of the bonus game and the accumulated assets can be saved in a memory device. The player can then restore the status of the gaming session and the accumulated assets at a later gaming session.

[011] According to another embodiment of the invention, a gaming terminal for playing a wagering game includes a display and a controller. The display displays a wagering game having a plurality of symbols that indicate a randomly selected outcome of the wagering game. A controller is coupled to the display. The controller operates to simulate the building of a world, and to provide a bonus award that is based on an accumulation of assets associated with the simulated world. The controller also operates to allow a player to store accumulated assets in a memory device for use in a subsequent gaming session.

[012] The above summary of the present invention is not intended to represent each embodiment or every aspect of the present invention. The detailed description and Figures will describe many of the embodiments and aspects of the present invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[013] The foregoing and other advantages of the invention will become apparent upon reading the following detailed description and upon reference to the drawings.

[014] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a video gaming terminal according to one embodiment of the present invention.

[015] FIG. 2 is a block diagram of the gaming terminal of FIG. 1.

[016] FIGS. 3a and 3b illustrate the main and secondary displays of a gaming terminal of FIG. 1 displaying a wagering game with a winning outcome.

[017] FIGS. 4a and 4b illustrate the main and secondary displays of a gaming terminal of FIG. 1 displaying a wagering game.

[018] FIGS. 5a and 5b illustrate the main and secondary displays of a gaming terminal of FIG. 1 displaying a wagering game whereby a player has saved accumulated assets.

[019] FIGS. 6a and 6b illustrate the main and secondary displays of a gaming terminal of FIG. 1 displaying a wagering game.

[020] FIGS. 7a and 7b illustrate the main and secondary displays of a gaming terminal of FIG. 1 displaying a wagering game with a winning outcome.

[021] FIG. 8 illustrates the main display of a gaming terminal of FIG. 1 displaying a wagering game.

[022] FIG. 9 illustrates the main display of a gaming terminal of FIG. 1 displaying a bonus game.

[023] FIG. 10 illustrates the main display of a gaming terminal of FIG. 1 displaying a bonus game with player selectable options.

[024] FIGS. 11a and 11b illustrate the main and secondary display of a gaming terminal of FIG. 1 displaying a wagering game.

[025] FIGS. 12a and 12b illustrate the main and secondary display of a gaming terminal of FIG. 1 displaying a wagering game with a winning outcome.

[026] FIGS. 13a and 13b illustrate the main and secondary display of a gaming terminal of FIG. 1 displaying a wagering game whereby a player has saved accumulated assets.

[027] While the invention is susceptible to various modifications and alternative forms, specific embodiments have been shown by way of example in the drawings and

will be described in detail herein. It should be understood, however, that the invention is not intended to be limited to the particular forms disclosed. Rather, the invention is to cover all modifications, equivalents, and alternatives falling within the spirit and scope of the invention as defined by the appended claims.

DESCRIPTION OF ILLUSTRATIVE EMBODIMENTS

[028] The present invention is directed to a gaming terminal and a method of playing a wagering game. The wagering game may include a basic game and a bonus game that includes building a simulated world. Generally, a simulated world includes a physical setting and one or more inhabitants. The inhabitants may be life forms, machines, or objects. The inhabitants interact with their setting (*i.e.*, digging tunnels, pumping oil) and/or with the other inhabitants. These interactions may lead to favorable outcomes for a player. The more time a player spends playing the wagering game and building a simulated world, the greater the number of inhabitants and interactions that can occur, and the more chances of getting such favorable outcomes. The occurrences of many or all of the interactions are controlled by a processor or controller that performs random selections, allowing the simulated world to be conducted as part of a wagering game.

[029] In one embodiment, the simulated world may be a business enterprise. The business enterprise can take many different forms. For example, a business enterprise may include a ranch, a farm, an oil drilling business, or a gold mine, as will be shown in the figures discussed below. These enterprises have assets that may be accumulated by a player who can exchange the assets for an award, *i.e.*, credits, or save the assets for use in a future gaming session. The present invention contemplates using many different types of business enterprises with associated assets. Several examples are described in more detail in the following paragraphs, however the present invention is not limited to the examples given here.

[030] A simulated world may also take the form of a non-business enterprise. Such non-business enterprises may include, as examples, an aquarium that gradually gains more fish, a space ship that travels to different worlds and encounters aliens, a board game having increasingly-valued properties, and a conquering warrior that collects valuable materials. These simulated worlds also have assets associated with them. The present invention contemplates using many different types of non-business

enterprises with associated assets, examples of which are given in more detail below. The examples are not meant, however, to limit the scope of the present invention.

[031] FIG. 1 shows a perspective view of a typical gaming terminal 10 used by gaming establishments, such as casinos. With regard to the present invention, the gaming terminal 10 may be any type of gaming terminal and may have varying structures and methods of operation. For example, the gaming terminal 10 may be a mechanical gaming terminal configured to play mechanical slots, or it may be an electromechanical or electrical gaming terminal configured to play video slots or a video casino game, such as blackjack, slots, keno, poker, etc.

[032] As shown, the gaming terminal 10 includes input devices, such as a wager acceptor 16 (shown as a card wager acceptor 16a and a cash wager acceptor 16b), a touch screen 21, a push-button panel 22, and an information reader 24. For outputs, the gaming terminal 10 includes a payout mechanism 23, a main display 26 for displaying information about the basic wagering game, and a secondary display 27 that may display an electronic version of a pay table, and/or also possibly game-related information or other entertainment features. While these typical components found in the gaming terminal 10 are described below, it should be understood that numerous other elements may exist and may be used in any number of combinations to create various forms of a gaming terminal.

[033] The wager acceptor 16 may be provided in many forms, individually or in combination. The cash wager acceptor 16a may include a coin slot acceptor or a note acceptor to input value to the gaming terminal 10. The card wager acceptor 16b may include a card-reading device for reading a card that has a recorded monetary value with which it is associated. The card wager acceptor 16b may also receive a card that authorizes access to a central account, which can transfer money to the gaming terminal 10.

[034] Also included is the payout mechanism 23, which performs the reverse functions of the wager acceptor. For example, the payout mechanism 23 may include a coin dispenser or a note dispenser to output value from gaming terminal 10. Also, the payout mechanism 23 may also be adapted to receive a card that authorizes the gaming terminal to transfer credits from the gaming terminal 10 to a central account.

[035] The push button panel 22 is typically offered, in addition to the touch screen 21, to provide players with an option on how to make their game selections.

Alternatively, the push button panel 22 provides inputs for one aspect of operating the game, while the touch screen 21 allows for inputs needed for another aspect of operating the game.

[036] The outcome of the basic wagering game is displayed to the player on the main display 26. The main display 26 may take the form of a cathode ray tube (CRT), a high resolution LCD, a plasma display, LED, or any other type of video display suitable for use in the gaming terminal 10. As shown, the main display 26 includes the touch screen 21 overlaying the entire monitor (or a portion thereof) to allow players to make game-related selections. Alternatively, the gaming terminal 10 may have a number of mechanical reels to display the game outcome, as well.

[037] In some embodiments, the information reader 24 is a card reader that allows for identification of a player by reading a card with information indicating his or her true identity. Currently, identification is used by casinos for rewarding certain players with complimentary services or special offers. For example, a player may be enrolled in the gaming establishment's players' club and may be awarded certain complimentary services as that player collects points in his or her player-tracking account. The player inserts his or her card into the player-identification card reader 24, which allows the casino's computers to register that player's wagering at the gaming terminal 10. The information reader 24 may also include a keypad (not shown) for entering a personal identification number (PIN). The gaming terminal 10 may require that the player enter their PIN prior to obtaining information. The gaming terminal 10 may use the secondary display 27 for providing the player with information about his or her account or other player-specific information. Also, in some embodiments, the information reader 24 may be used to restore assets that the player achieved during a previous game session and had saved.

[038] As shown in FIG. 2, the various components of the gaming terminal 10 are controlled by a central processing unit (CPU) 30 (such as a microprocessor or microcontroller). To provide the gaming functions, the CPU 30 executes a game program that allows for the randomly selected outcome. The CPU 30 is also coupled to or includes a local memory 32. The local memory 32 may comprise a volatile memory 33 (*e.g.*, a random-access memory (RAM)) and a non-volatile memory 34 (*e.g.*, an EEPROM). It should be appreciated that the CPU 30 may include one or

more microprocessors. Similarly, the local memory 32 may include multiple RAM and multiple program memories.

[039] Communications between the peripheral components of the gaming terminal 10 and the CPU 30 occur through input/output (I/O) circuits 35a. As such, the CPU 30 also controls and receives inputs from the peripheral components of the gaming terminal 10. Further, the CPU 30 communicates with external systems via the I/O circuits 35b. Although the I/O circuits 35 may be shown as a single block, it should be appreciated that the I/O circuits 35 may include a number of different types of I/O circuits.

[040] In some embodiments, the CPU 30 may not be inside the gaming terminal 10. Instead, the CPU 30 may be part of a game network 50 (FIG. 2) and may be used to control numerous gaming terminals 10. In these embodiments, the CPU 30 will run the basic games for each of the gaming terminals 10, and may also be used to link the gaming terminals 10 together. The game network 50 can include progressive jackpots that are contributed to by all or some of the gaming terminals 10 in the network (e.g., terminal-level jackpots that only each terminal 10 contributes to, bank-level jackpots that are contributed to by all of the terminals 10 in a particular bank, and wide-area jackpots that are contributed to by a larger number of terminals 10, such as multiple banks). Alternatively, the game network 50 can allow the player to retrieve assets obtained while playing one terminal 10 at a different gaming terminal that is also part of the game network. Assets may be any number of things, including, but not limited to, monetary or non-monetary awards, features that a player builds up in a bonus or progressive game to win awards, etc.

[041] In some embodiments, the CPU 30 is also used with the information reader 24 to restore saved assets. For example, in one embodiment, the information reader 24 is adapted to receive and distribute tickets. The tickets each include a unique identifier. The unique identifier links the ticket to a file contained within the local memory 32 or a system memory 52 located in the game network 50. The file includes the assets that are being stored from a previous game. Monetary awards include game credits or money, while the non-monetary awards can be free plays (e.g., free spins), multipliers, or access to bonus and/or progressive games.

[042] When a player inserts a ticket into the information reader 24, the CPU 30 obtains the unique identifier and causes the appropriate memory 32, 52 to be searched,

and the file containing the unique identifier matching the identifier on the ticket is retrieved. Any assets or other information contained in this file are then transmitted to the gaming terminal 10, and the player regains any assets that were saved during a previous game. This allows the player to keep assets even after a particular gaming session ends, which increases player commitment to a game and decreases vulturing (and possibly even ends it).

[043] In other embodiments, the information reader 24 may include a card reader, and the unique identifier provided at the gaming terminal 10 may be stored on a personal identification card, such as one described above. Or, the gaming terminal 10 includes a radio frequency identification device (RFID) transceiver or receiver so that an RFID transponder held by the player can be used to provide the unique identifier of the player at the gaming terminal 10 without the need to insert a card into the gaming terminal 10. RFID components can be those available from Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (under the United States Department of Energy) of Richland, WA.

[044] In other embodiments, the information reader 24 may include a biometric reader, such as a finger, hand, or retina scanner, and the unique identifier may be the scanned biometric information. Additional information regarding biometric scanning, such as fingerprint scanning or hand geometry scanning, is available from International Biometric Group LLC of New York, NY. Other biometric identification techniques can be used as well for providing a unique identifier of the player. For example, a microphone can be used in a biometric identification device on the gaming terminal so that the player can be recognized using a voice recognition system.

[045] In other embodiments, the player may simply have to enter in a unique identification code and password into the gaming terminal 10. In these embodiments, the player would not have to insert a physical object (such as a card or ticket) into the gaming terminal, but would instead use the information reader 24 as an input device, such as a keyboard.

[046] In summary, there are many techniques in which to provide a unique identifier for the player so that the assets accumulated by the player during one wagering session can be stored in either the system memory 52 or local memory 32, thereby allowing the player to subsequently access those assets at the same gaming terminal 10 or a different gaming terminal within the network 50. As described below with reference

to FIGS. 3 to 13, various assets related to the wagering game features and formats can be stored after one gaming session and used in a subsequent gaming session(s) to enhance the gaming experience for the player.

[047] The main display 26 of one embodiment of the present invention is shown in more detail in FIG. 3b. In this embodiment, the basic wagering game is a slot machine game, with symbols on five different reels 36, 38, 40, 42, 44. The reels 36-44 may be either traditional mechanical reels or they may be computer-generated images of reels, with each reel composed of a plurality of symbols. The payline indicators 46 indicate a randomly selected outcome for each payline, which is the combination of symbols on the reels 36-44. Thereafter, an outcome indicator 48 indicates whether the outcome has resulted in a winning outcome or a non-winning outcome. While multiple paylines are shown, a gaming terminal 10 with a single payline will also work with the present invention.

[048] A bonus game can be achieved by a bonus-game outcome in the basic wagering game. The bonus game may be similar to or completely different from the basic wagering game. As will be discussed in more detail below, the bonus game simulates the building of a world. A player receives a bonus award in the bonus game based on the accumulation of assets associated with the simulated world. The accumulation of assets can be affected by the randomly selected outcome of the basic wagering game. A player can also be allowed to exchange one or all of the accumulated assets for a payout. After a player decides to terminate play at the gaming terminal, the accumulated assets not exchanged by the player can be stored by the player in the local memory 32 or system memory 52, depending on the architecture and operation of the overall gaming system. The accumulated assets can then be restored for use in a subsequent gaming session by the player.

[049] A player may also be allowed to save the status of a bonus game (or a basic wagering game) prior to completing a gaming session. In this case, after a player returns for a subsequent gaming session, the gaming terminal can receive an input from the returning player to start the wagering game at the same point as the status of the earlier gaming session. The subsequent gaming session may be played at the same or a different gaming terminal as the first gaming session.

[050] The main display 26 shown in FIG. 3b further illustrates a basic wagering game with a ranch theme (*i.e.*, a "Virtual Ranch") having a randomly selected

outcome that is a winning outcome. The simulated world that is displayed on the secondary display 27 (FIG. 3a) in this example is a ranch where the player collects cows and bulls. In this particular embodiment, a combination of three bulls along an active payline 46 constitutes a winning outcome. The player is awarded another bull 50 in his or her ongoing bonus game, which is a herd of cattle displayed in the secondary display 27. A winning outcome can also include a combination of three cow symbols along any payline. Upon receiving this winning outcome, a player would receive a cow for the herd. For every game that is played where the player has at least one bull and at least one cow in the herd, there is a chance that a bull and a cow will pair off and make another cow that will be added to the herd. The award of a cow or a bull can require some specific type of outcome on the reels 36-44, or can be an entirely random event. Thus, the number of cows and bulls displayed in the secondary display 27 increases as the player continues to play, as illustrated in FIG. 4a.

[051] As shown in FIG. 5a, a player may get a combination of symbols that triggers a character to appear that offers the player a monetary or non-monetary award for the herd that the player has accumulated thus far. The player can either accept the offer and obtain the award or reject the offer and allow the herd to continue to grow. For example, in FIG. 5a, the character offers the player 100 credits for the herd. The player must then make a decision of whether to take the 100 credits or continue with the herd he has accumulated. The appearance of the character may also occur randomly, without a triggering combination of symbols, as in a mystery pay.

[052] Finally, a player is given the option of saving the herd of accumulated cows and bulls, as shown in FIG. 5b, for a future gaming session. The player will then be allowed to store these assets to be collected or used in a future gaming session. For example, the player can save his herd containing one bull and four cows and be able to retrieve them at a later time. The herd can be considered an asset that is saved in a local memory 32 or system memory 52 (or on a card, ticket, etc) for use by the player in subsequent gaming session.

[053] FIGS. 6-13 illustrate other variations on games played at gaming terminals 10 that give players an option to accumulate assets of a simulated world. For example, FIG. 6b shows a wagering game with a main display 126 having symbols on three reels, one of which is an oil derrick 160, and presenting on oil drilling theme (the

“Virtual Oil Baron”). Above the main display 126 in FIG. 6a is a secondary display 127 which contains an array of oil derricks 160, each of which has a corresponding player-selectable option 162. Every time an oil derrick 160 symbol appears on an active payline of the reels, one of the oil derricks 60 shown in the secondary display 127 is awarded to the player. The player is allowed to choose an oil derrick from the array of derricks using the player-selectable option 162 located adjacent to the oil derrick 160.

[054] As shown in FIGS. 7a and 7b, when a player obtains three gusher symbols on the reels, the “gusher bonus” 164 is started. Some or all of the oil derricks 160 contained in the secondary display 127 begin to gush oil. If one of more oil derricks 160 that is gushing oil is one that was previously selected by the player, the player receives the award associated with the gushing derrick 160. In the illustrated example, the player “owns” the oil derrick in the lower right corner, and the player receives 500 credits. In one embodiment, all oil derricks 160 that had no oil gush, but were “owned” by the player are retained by the player for the next gusher bonus. When the player ends the gaming session, the player is given the option of saving the oil derricks 160 contained in the secondary display 127. The player will then be allowed to store these assets to be collected or used in a future gaming session.

[055] FIG. 8 shows a main display 226 of a wagering game having symbols on five different reels with a farm theme (the “Virtual Corn Crop”). Above the reels are a number of open fields 280. After commencing play, a player may achieve a combination of symbols that triggers a “farm bonus,” as shown in FIG. 9. The “farm bonus” is displayed on the main display 226, and presents the player with a plurality of seed packets 282. At this time, the player is allowed to select one or more of the seed packets 282. Some of the seed packets 282 are associated with an award of credits, while other seed packets 282 are associated with seeds that are planted in the open fields 280. For example, in FIG. 9, the player has been allowed to select three seed packets 282. One of the seed packets 282a is associated with an award of 15 credits, while two packets 282b are associated with corn seeds. As such, the player is awarded 15 credits and two of the open fields 282 are filled with corn 284.

[056] At the end of the bonus game, the player is offered a prize in exchange for the corn. As shown in FIG. 10, the player is offered 200 credits for two cornfields. Alternatively, the player can choose to keep the corn and plant extra fields. If the

player fills more open fields 280, the award is progressively larger (e.g., 75 credits for one open field 280; 200 credits for two open fields 280; 350 credits for three open fields 280; and 550 credits for four open fields 280) If the player declines, the player returns to the basic game and continues to play it, with the hope of triggering another bonus game during which he or she may select a packet 282 that fills the third field. Of course, variations in the game could exist such that certain seed packets 282 are a “drought” outcome that could destroy one or more corn fields 284. Or, the player may be only allowed to hold his or her corn fields for a certain length of time before there is a forced “harvest,” which could pay less than the normal bonus award per corn field 284.

[057] At the end of the gaming session, the player may save any corn fields 284 for a subsequent gaming session during which he or she may trigger a bonus game in the basic game and hopefully fill the remaining open fields 280. As such these corn fields can be thought of as assets that are accumulated over a period of time.

[058] Another embodiment of the present invention, as shown in FIGS. 11a and 11b (the “Virtual Gold Mine”), includes a main display 326 of a wagering game containing different symbols on five reels. A secondary display 327 contains a miner 390 in the center of an earthen mine. Surrounding the miner 390 at different distances are gold nuggets 392 that are associated with bonus values. While the values of the nuggets 392 are shown as being equal, the values can be different as well.

[059] After the player achieves a pick symbol 394 on one or more of the reels, the miner 390 digs out one space in a random, or symbol determined, direction, as shown in FIG. 12a. For a symbol-driven direction, the pick symbol 394 may have an arrow on it, or a player-selectable array could be provided in which the player selects one element which reveals the direction of the next pick movement. If the miner reaches a nugget 392, the value of the nugget 392 is awarded to the player. After the player leaves the game, the mine that has been dug can be saved and used in future gaming sessions. For example, the player received 500 credits and saved the mine as depicted in FIGS. 13a and 13b. Players may be motivated to save the mine for a subsequent gaming session if they are very close to a nugget 394 or a group of nuggets 394. Furthermore, the game could be configured to allow the play (e.g. the 500 credits), such that he or she can obtain that award automatically at a subsequent gaming session.

[060] In addition to the simulated worlds described above, other simulated worlds having various assets relating to the simulated worlds can be stored after a gaming session and used in a subsequent gaming session. Examples of other enterprises whereby a player achieves simulated world-building outcomes in the wagering game and has the option of saving assets associated with the simulated world include: an aquarium where a player can accumulate various types of fish or ocean life as assets; a developer where assets include buildings that become taller and wider; a cruise ship where a player accumulates new ports and destinations; a space ship where assets can include different worlds and aliens, and a player can form alliances with the aliens; and a board game where a player accumulates properties that increase in value, and can replace properties that have lower values with properties that have higher values, as for example, in the game Monopoly®.

[061] Other possible simulated worlds that are within the scope of the invention can include an orchard where a player accumulates assets such as trees that grow and produce fruit. In a wagering game, for example, a player may achieve an outcome that allows the player in a bonus game to pick fruit that is associated with an award of credits. Alternatively, the player may be allowed to pick fruit that is associated with seeds that can be planted to grow more trees that the player can accumulate.

[062] Another example that is within the scope of the present invention is an investment group where a player can accumulate stocks, bonds, etc. After achieving a certain outcome in a basic wagering game, a player may be allowed to sell the investments that he or she has accumulated. A player may also be given the option of increasing certain kinds of investments by exchanging one kind of investment for another. For example, a player may decide to cash in all of his stocks for credits, or to exchange the stocks for other investment opportunities.

[063] A further example includes a conquering warrior that accumulates gold and other treasures. In this embodiment, a player achieves outcomes in the basic game that allows he or she to accumulate weapons, armies, and other things necessary to conquer a city. Once a player has accumulated such assets, he or she may be eligible for a bonus game that allows the player to use the assets to conquer cities or civilizations and accumulate gold, silver, and other valuable assets. At some point, the player is offered credits or alternatively, more weapons, for these valuable assets.

[064] Another embodiment of the present invention may include a train yard containing boxcars. During play of the basic game, a player accumulates train engines. When a bonus outcome is achieved in the basic game, each train engine that the player has accumulated hauls away one boxcar, and an award is revealed. The player is allowed to choose which boxcar is taken by each engine using a player-selectable option. Thus, the player's selection dictates the credits that are awarded. Along the way, the player may be given the option to save the status of the game and the accumulated assets, *i.e.*, train engines, to be restored in a future gaming session. This is an example of where a player accumulates "picks" during the wagering game and uses these "picks" to select player-selectable elements that influence the outcome of the wagering game.

[065] As with all of the above examples, the status of the game and any assets that a player has accumulated may be saved in a memory device and restored by the player in a later gaming session. While the present invention has been described in terms of a bonus game where assets of a simulated world are accumulated and saved, the present invention also allows for such assets to be accumulated and saved in a basic game.

[066] While the present invention has been described with reference to one or more particular embodiments, those skilled in the art will recognize that many changes may be made thereto without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention. Each of these embodiments and obvious variations thereof is contemplated as falling within the spirit and scope of the claimed invention, which is set forth in the following claims.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A gaming terminal for playing a wagering game, comprising:
a basic game having a plurality of symbols that indicate a randomly selected outcome of said basic game in response to a wager input;
a bonus game simulating the building of a world and providing a bonus award based on an accumulation of assets associated with said simulated world, said randomly selected outcome in said wagering game affecting said accumulation of assets; and
wherein, in response to a termination of a gaming session in which said basic game and said bonus game were played, said accumulation of assets being selectively stored by said player in a memory device for use in a subsequent gaming session by said player.
2. The gaming terminal of claim 1, wherein said simulated world is a business enterprise, said business enterprise being a ranch.
3. The gaming terminal of claim 2, wherein said accumulated assets associated with said ranch include at least one cow or bull.
4. The gaming terminal of claim 1, wherein said simulated world is a business enterprise, said business enterprise being an oil drilling business.
5. The gaming terminal of claim 4, wherein said accumulated assets include at least one oil derrick.
6. The gaming terminal of claim 1, wherein said simulated world is a business enterprise, said business enterprise being a farm.
7. The gaming terminal of claim 6, wherein said accumulated assets associated with said farm include a field of crops.
8. The gaming terminal of claim 1, wherein said simulated world is a business enterprise, said business enterprise being a mine.
9. The gaming terminal of claim 8, wherein said accumulated assets associated with said mine include at least one gold nugget.
10. The gaming terminal of claim 1, wherein said simulated world is a business enterprise that is selected from the group consisting of an investment group, a building developer, a cruise ship, and a train yard.
11. The gaming terminal of claim 1, wherein said simulated world is a non-business enterprise.

12. The gaming terminal of claim 11, wherein said non-business enterprise is selected from the group consisting of an aquarium, a space ship, a board game, an orchard, and a conquering warrior.
13. The gaming terminal of claim 1, wherein said simulated world includes a physical setting and one or more inhabitants.
14. The gaming terminal of claim 13, wherein said bonus award is based on interactions between said inhabitants
15. The gaming terminal of claim 1, wherein said memory device is located within said gaming terminal.
16. The gaming terminal of claim 1, wherein said memory device is located external to said gaming terminal and is coupled to said gaming terminal.
17. The gaming terminal of claim 1, wherein said bonus award is progressively increased based on said accumulation of assets.
18. The gaming terminal of claim 17, wherein said bonus award can only be awarded during said bonus game.
19. The gaming terminal of claim 18, wherein said bonus award is awarded based on a player selectable option.
20. The gaming terminal of claim 1, wherein said bonus award is provided to the player in the form of an option to exchange said assets for a credit award.
21. The gaming terminal of claim 20, wherein said option to exchange said assets is triggered by one of said randomly selected outcomes in said basic game.
22. The gaming terminal of claim 1, wherein said assets include a first type of asset and a second type of asset.
23. The gaming terminal of claim 22, wherein said assets can further be increased if said player acquires said first type of asset and said second type of asset.
24. The gaming terminal of claim 1, wherein, in response to an asset-acquiring outcome in said basic game, said player is permitted to select from among an array of assets.
25. A method of playing a wagering game having a basic game and a bonus game, comprising:
 - conducting said basic game at a gaming terminal;

achieving a bonus-game outcome in said basic game, said bonus game simulating the building of a world and providing a bonus award based on assets associated with said simulated world;
in response to achieving a first one of said bonus-game outcomes, accumulating at least one of said assets;
in response to achieving a second one of said bonus-game outcomes, allowing a player to exchange at least one of said assets for a bonus award;
receiving inputs from a player to save a status of said bonus game with said acquired assets prior to a player completing a gaming session; and
in a subsequent gaming session, receiving inputs from a player to start said bonus game at a point that is the same as said status for said first gaming session.

26. The method of claim 25, wherein said simulated world is a business enterprise, said business enterprise being a ranch.

27. The method of claim 26, wherein said accumulated assets associated with said ranch include at least one cow or bull.

28. The method of claim 25, wherein said simulated world is a business enterprise, said business enterprise being an oil-drilling business.

29. The method of claim 28, wherein said accumulated assets is at least one oil derrick.

30. The method of claim 25, wherein said simulated world is a business enterprise, said business enterprise being a farm.

31. The method of claim 30, wherein said accumulated assets associated with said farm is at least one field of crops.

32. The method of claim 25, wherein said simulated world is a business enterprise, said business enterprise being a mine.

33. The method of claim 32, wherein said accumulated assets associated with said mine includes at least one gold nugget.

34. The method of claim 25, wherein said simulated world is a business enterprise that is selected from the group consisting of an investment group, a building developer, a cruise ship, and a train yard.

35. The method of claim 25, wherein said simulated world is a non-business enterprise.

36. The method of claim 35, wherein said non-business enterprise is selected from the group consisting of an aquarium, a space ship, a board game, an orchard, and a conquering warrior.
37. The method of claim 25, wherein said simulated world includes a physical setting and one or more inhabitants.
38. The method of claim 37, wherein said bonus award is based on interactions between said inhabitants.
39. The method of claim 25, wherein saving a status of said bonus game with said acquired assets includes using a memory device located within said gaming terminal.
40. The method of claim 25, wherein saving a status of said bonus game with said acquired assets includes using a memory device that is located external to said gaming terminal and is coupled to said gaming terminal.
41. The method of claim 25, wherein providing said bonus award includes progressively increasing said bonus award based on said accumulation of assets.
42. The method of claim 41, wherein providing said bonus award includes awarding said bonus award only during said bonus game.
43. The method of claim 42, wherein providing said bonus award includes awarding said bonus award based on a player selectable option.
44. The method of claim 25, wherein providing said bonus award includes awarding an option to exchange said assets for a credit award.
45. The method of claim 44, wherein said option to exchange said assets is triggered by one of said randomly selected outcomes in said basic game.
46. The method of claim 25, wherein accumulating said assets include accumulating a first type of asset and a second type of asset.
47. The method of claim 46, wherein said accumulation of assets can be increased by acquiring said first type of asset and said second type of asset.
48. The method of claim 25, wherein, in response to said achieving of an asset-acquiring outcome in said basic game, permitting said player to select from among an array of assets.
49. A method of playing a wagering game having a basic game and a bonus game, comprising:
conducting said basic game at a gaming terminal;

achieving a bonus-game outcome in said basic game, said bonus game simulating the building of a world and providing a bonus award based on assets associated with said simulated world;
in response to achieving said bonus-game outcome, accumulating a first set of assets;
allowing said player to save a status of said bonus game with said accumulated set of assets in a first gaming session for use in a subsequent gaming session.

50. The method of claim 49, further comprising the step of starting said bonus game at a point that is the same as said status for said first gaming session.

51. The method of claim 49, further comprising the step of accumulating a second set of assets in said bonus game in said subsequent gaming session.

52. The method of claim 49, further comprising the step of awarding said bonus award based on said first and second assets.

53. A gaming terminal for playing a wagering game, comprising:

a display for displaying a wagering game having a plurality of symbols that indicate a randomly selected outcome of said wagering game; and

a controller coupled to said display and operative to simulate the building of a world, said simulated world having assets associated with said simulated world;
provide a bonus award based on an accumulation of said assets associated with said world, said randomly selected outcome in said wagering game affecting said accumulation of assets; and

allow a player, in response to a termination of a gaming session in which said wagering game was played, to store said accumulation of assets in a memory device for use in a subsequent gaming session by said player.

54. The gaming terminal of claim 53, wherein said controller is located within said gaming terminal.

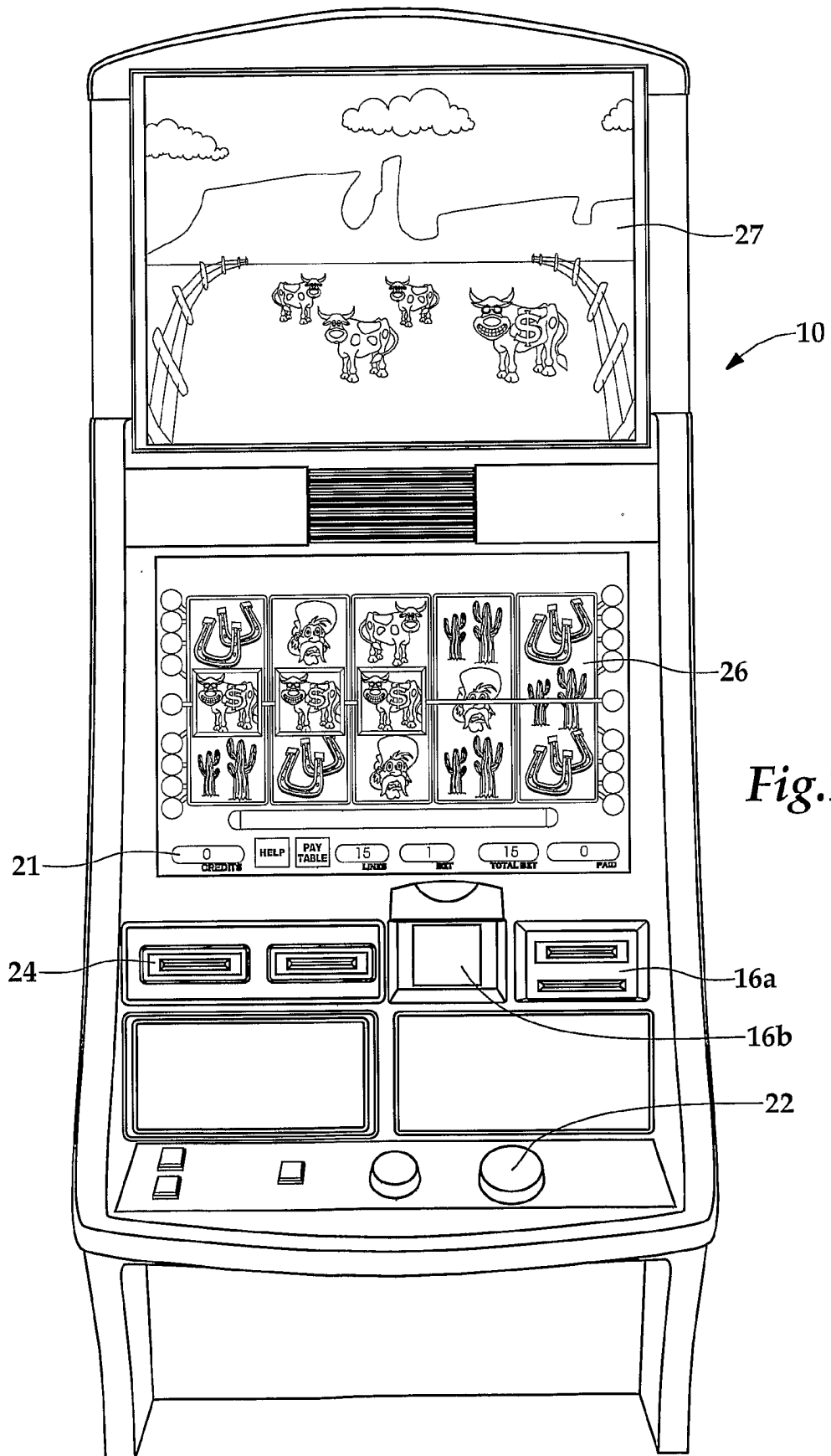
55. The gaming terminal of claim 53, wherein said controller is located external to said gaming terminal and is coupled to said gaming terminal.

56. A method of playing a wagering game, comprising

- initiating a first gaming session at a first gaming terminal, said first gaming terminal having a wagering game that simulates the building of a world, said simulated world including assets associated with said simulated world;
- accumulating said assets associated with said simulated world at said first gaming terminal;
- completing play at said first gaming terminal;
- saving said accumulated assets associated with said simulated world at said first gaming terminal;
- at a later time, initiating a second gaming session at a second gaming terminal;

and

- restoring said accumulated assets associated with said simulated world from said first gaming session at said second gaming terminal.



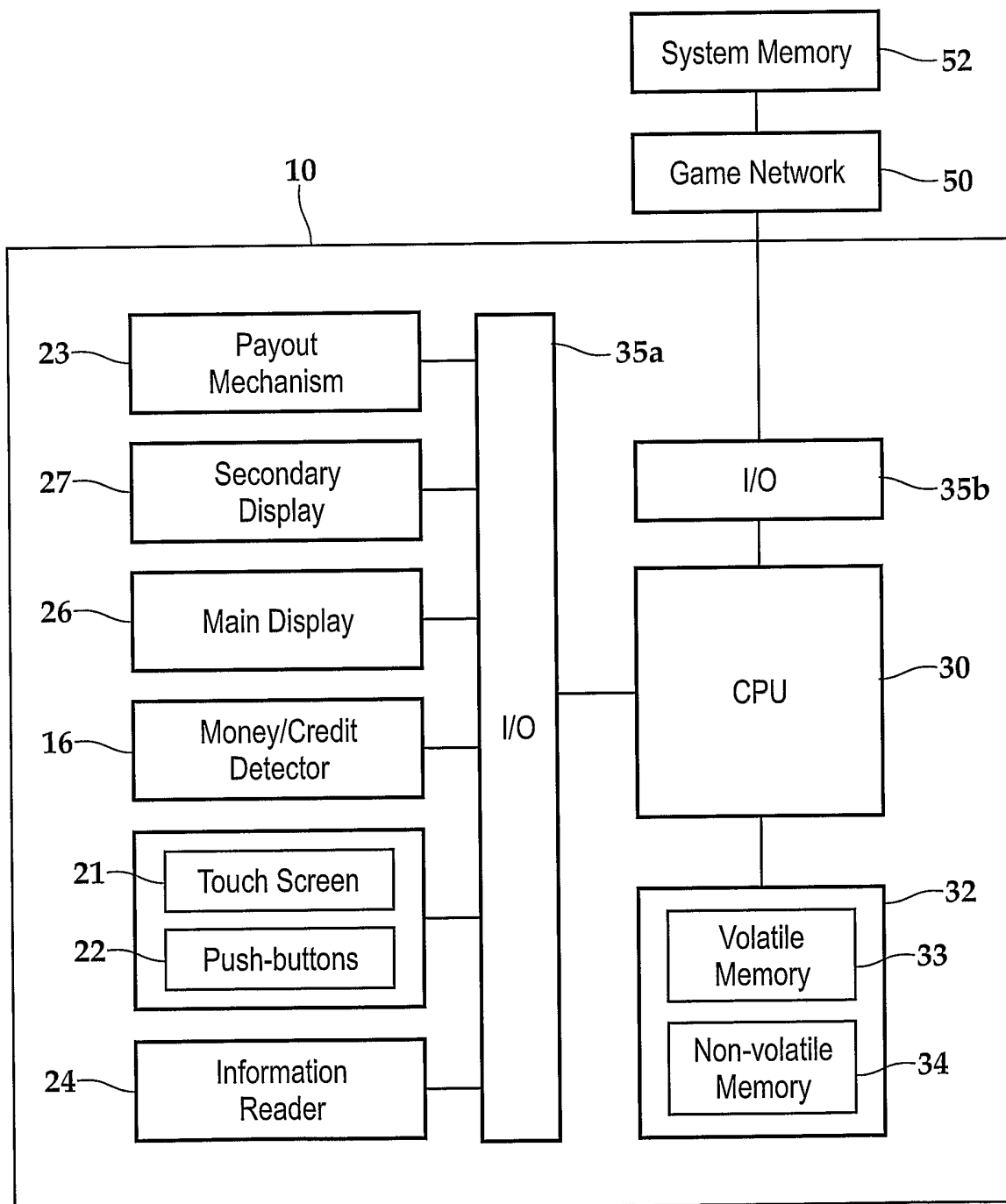


Fig.2

3/12

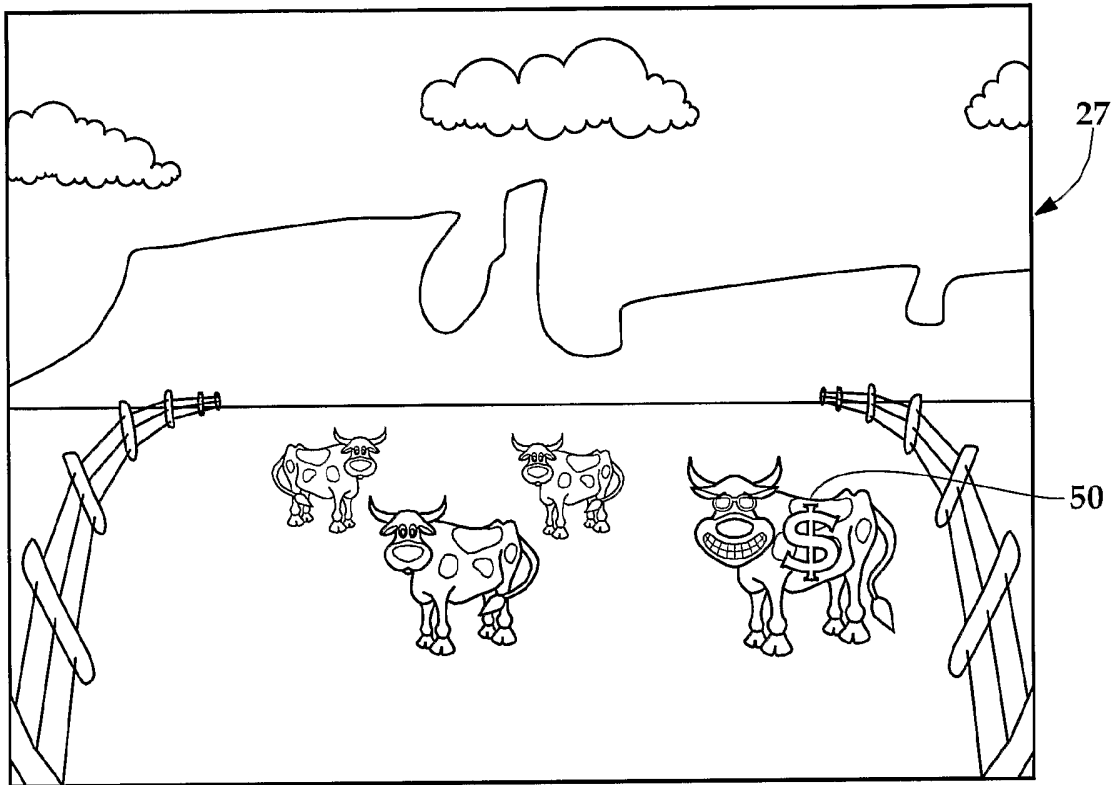


Fig. 3a

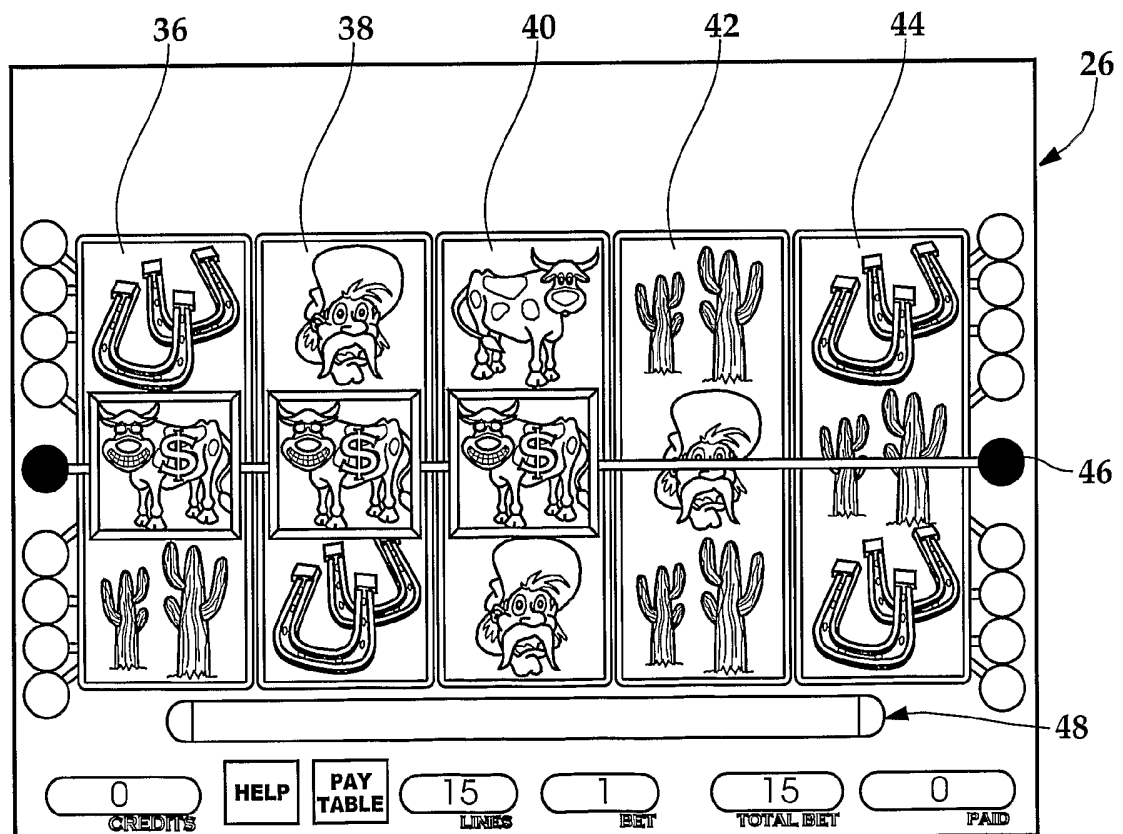


Fig. 3b

4/12

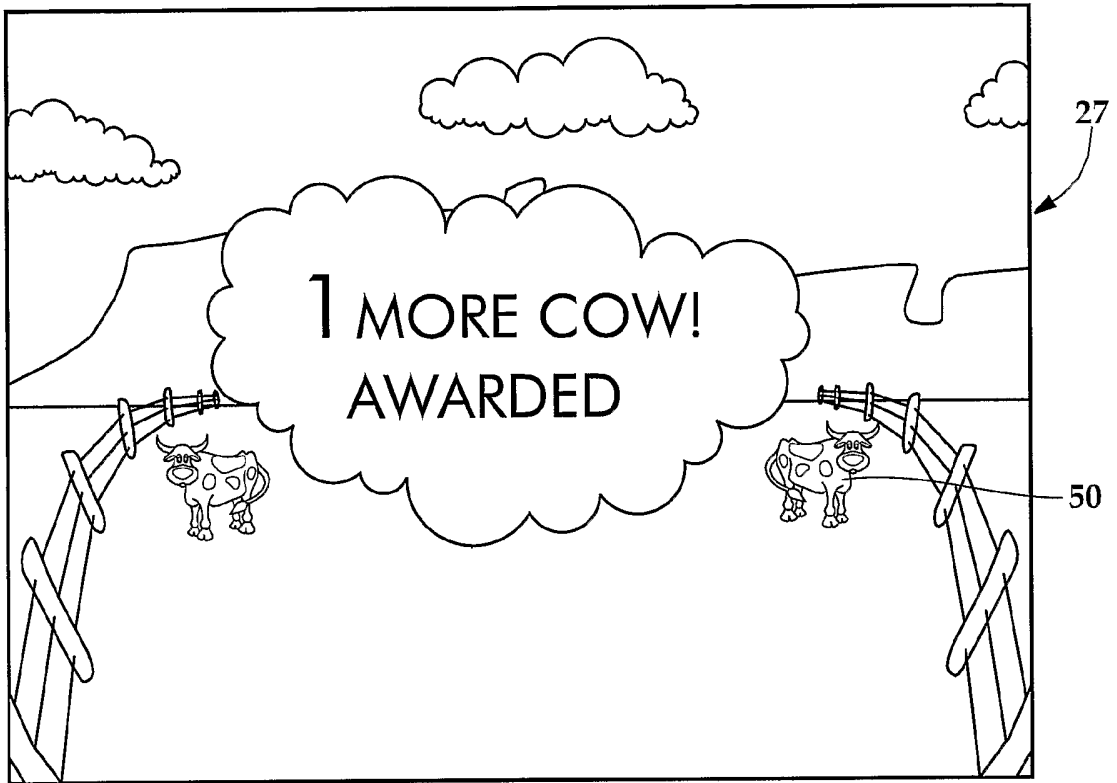


Fig.4a

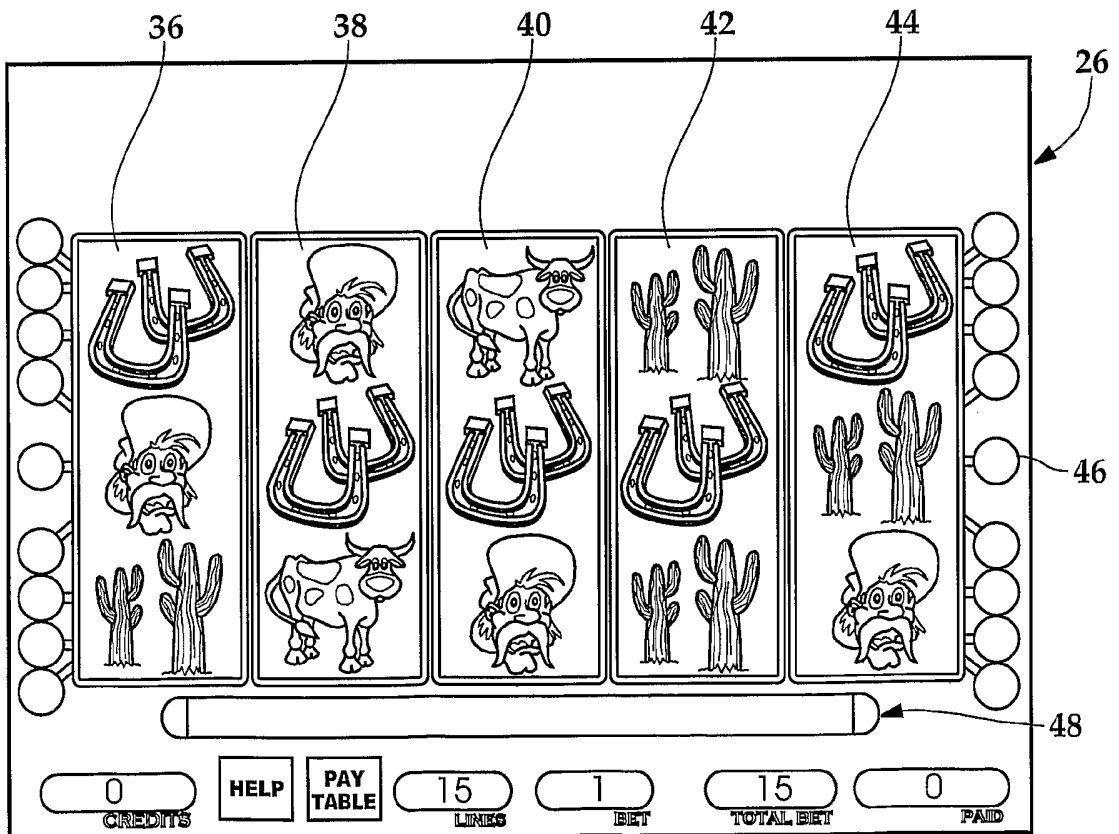


Fig.4b

5/12

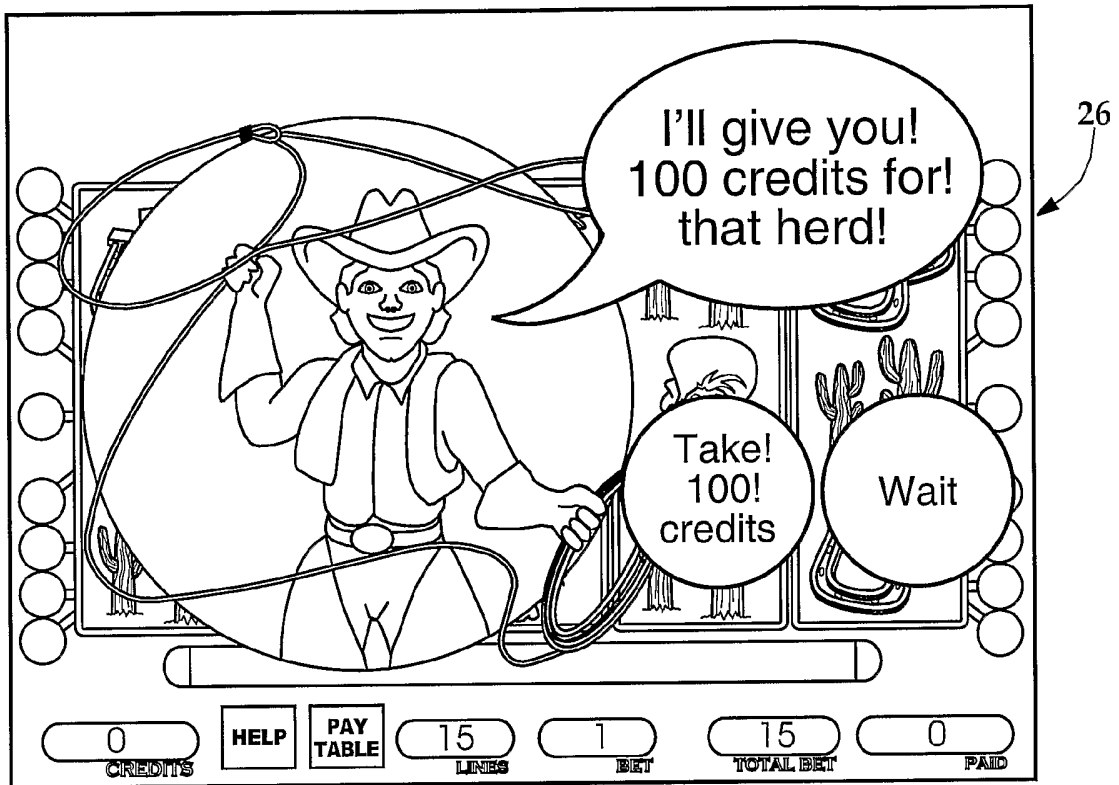


Fig.5a

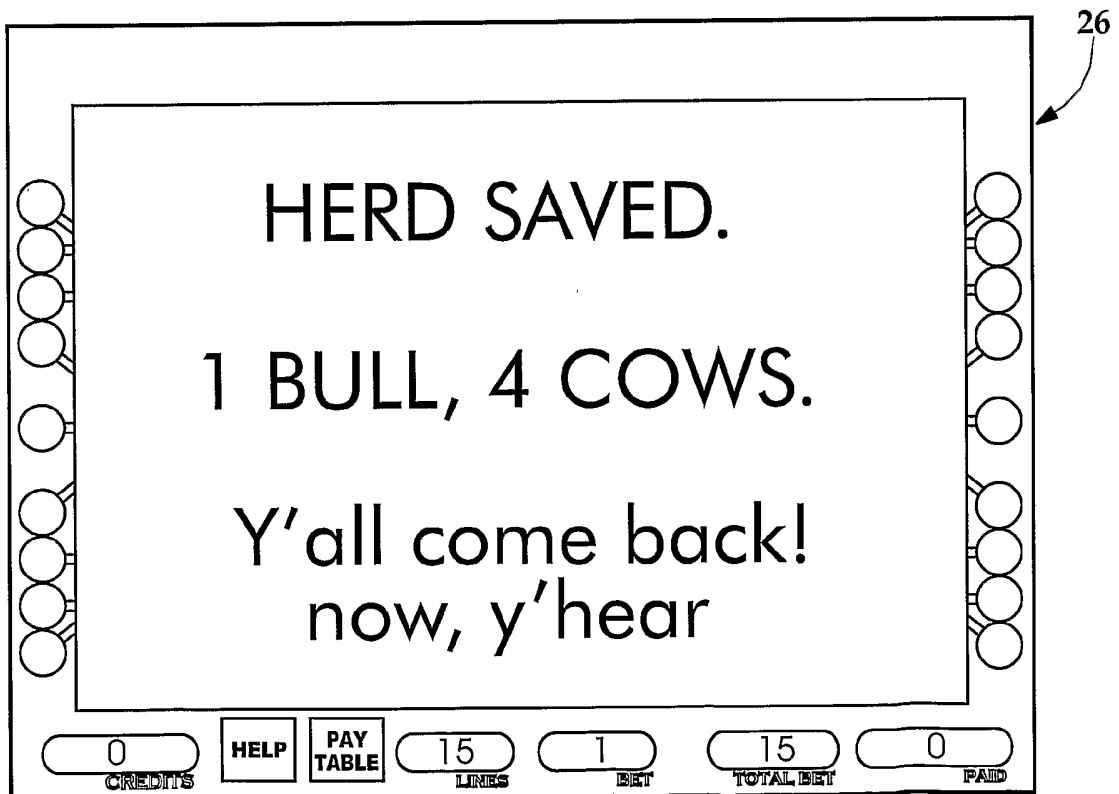
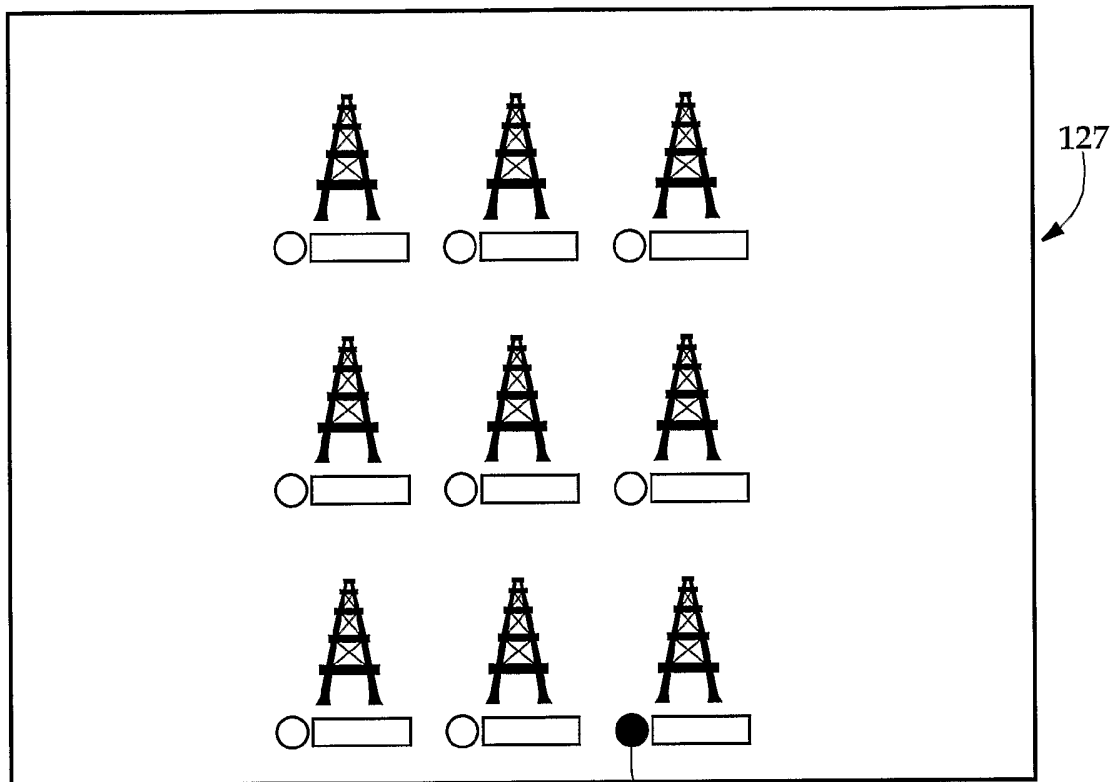


Fig.5b

6/12



162 *Fig.6a*

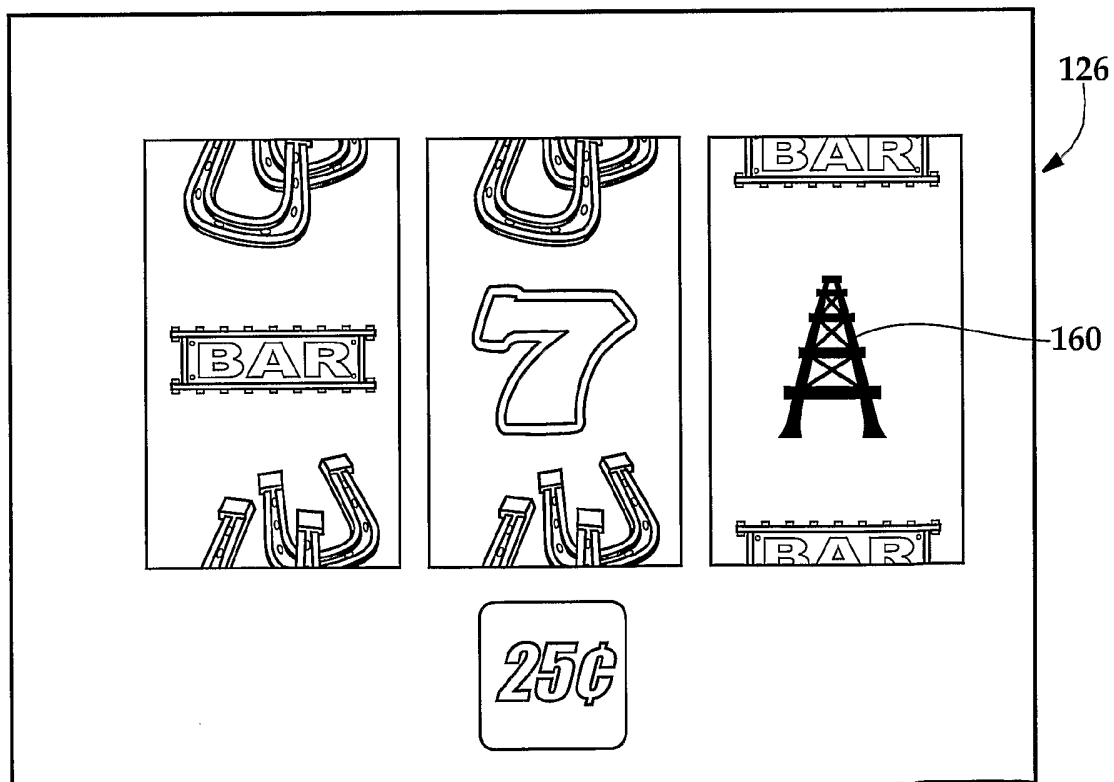
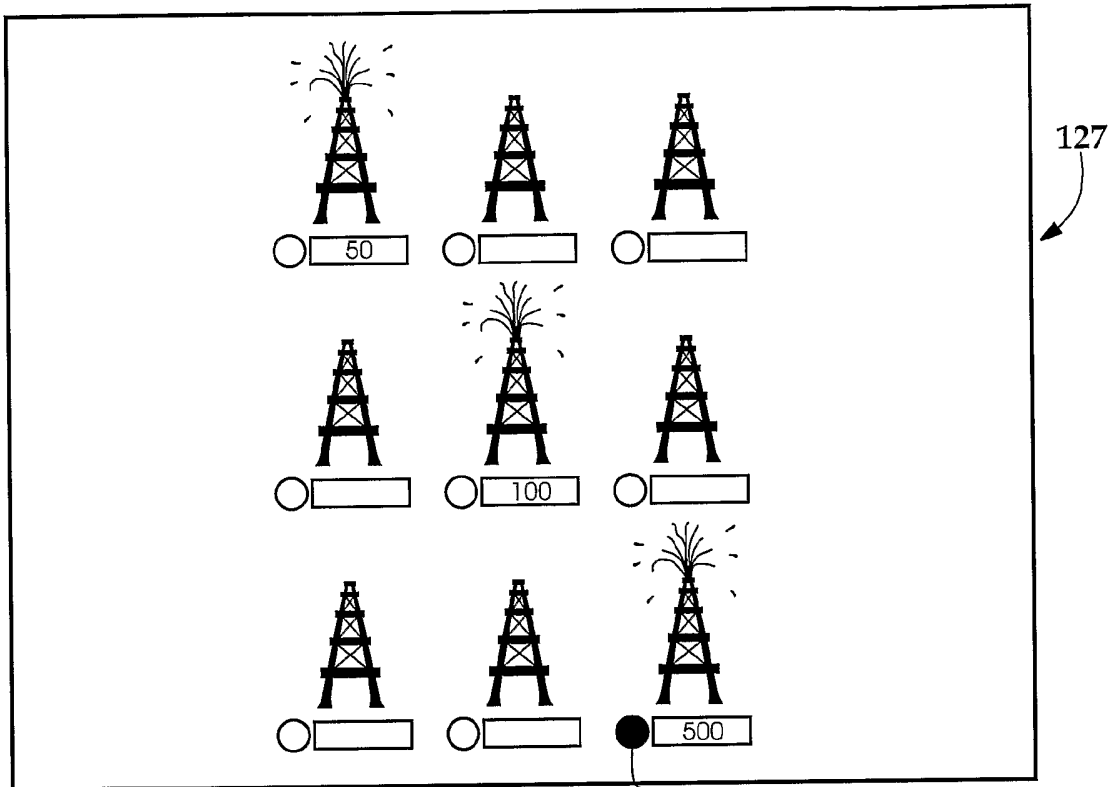


Fig.6b

7/12



162 *Fig.7a*

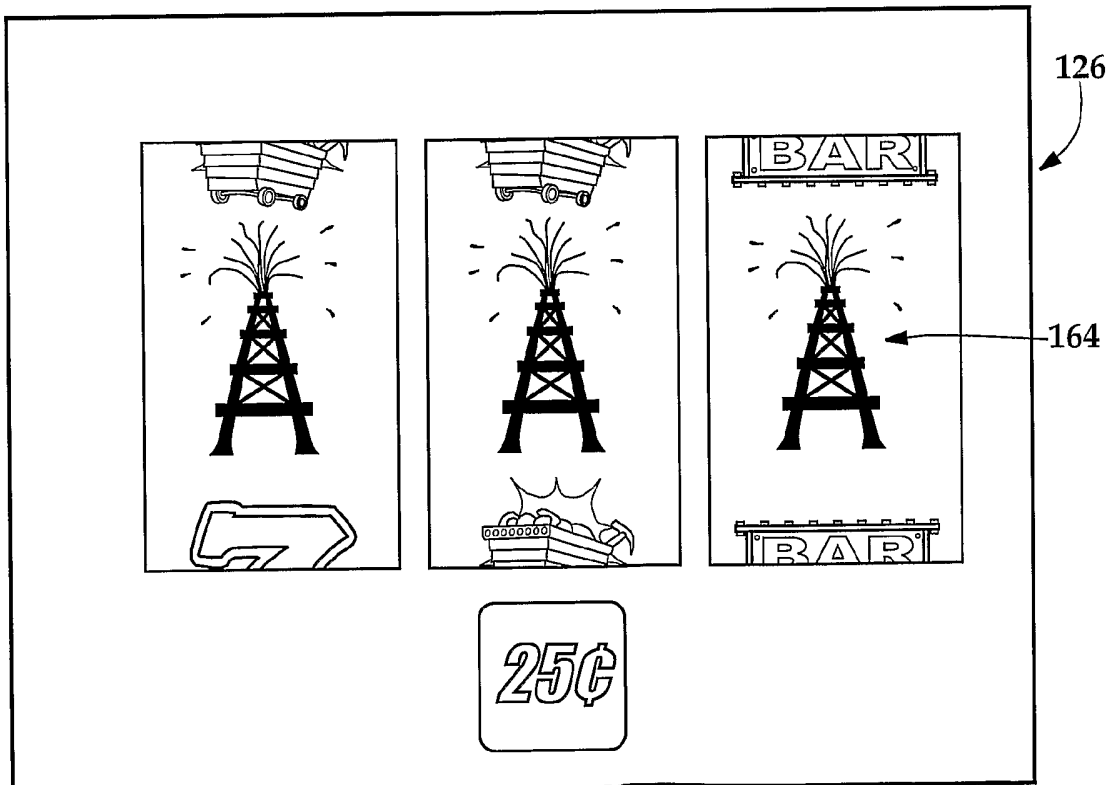


Fig.7b

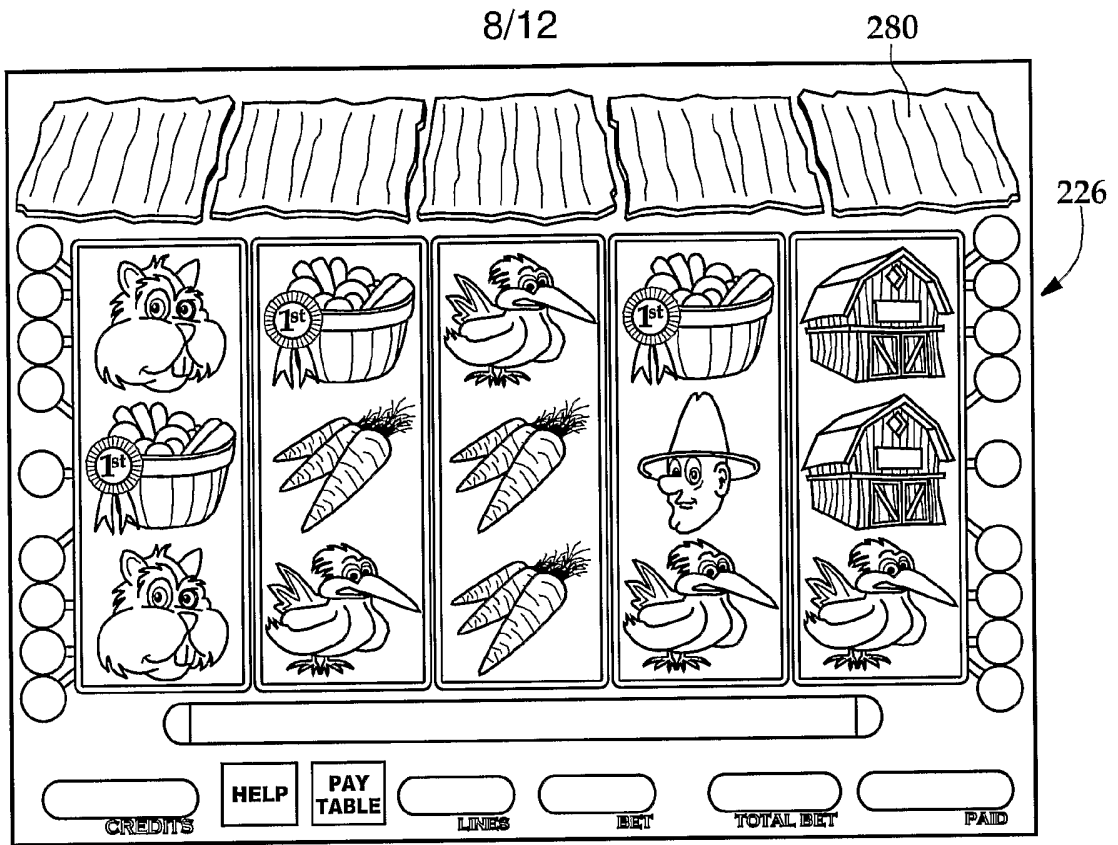


Fig. 8

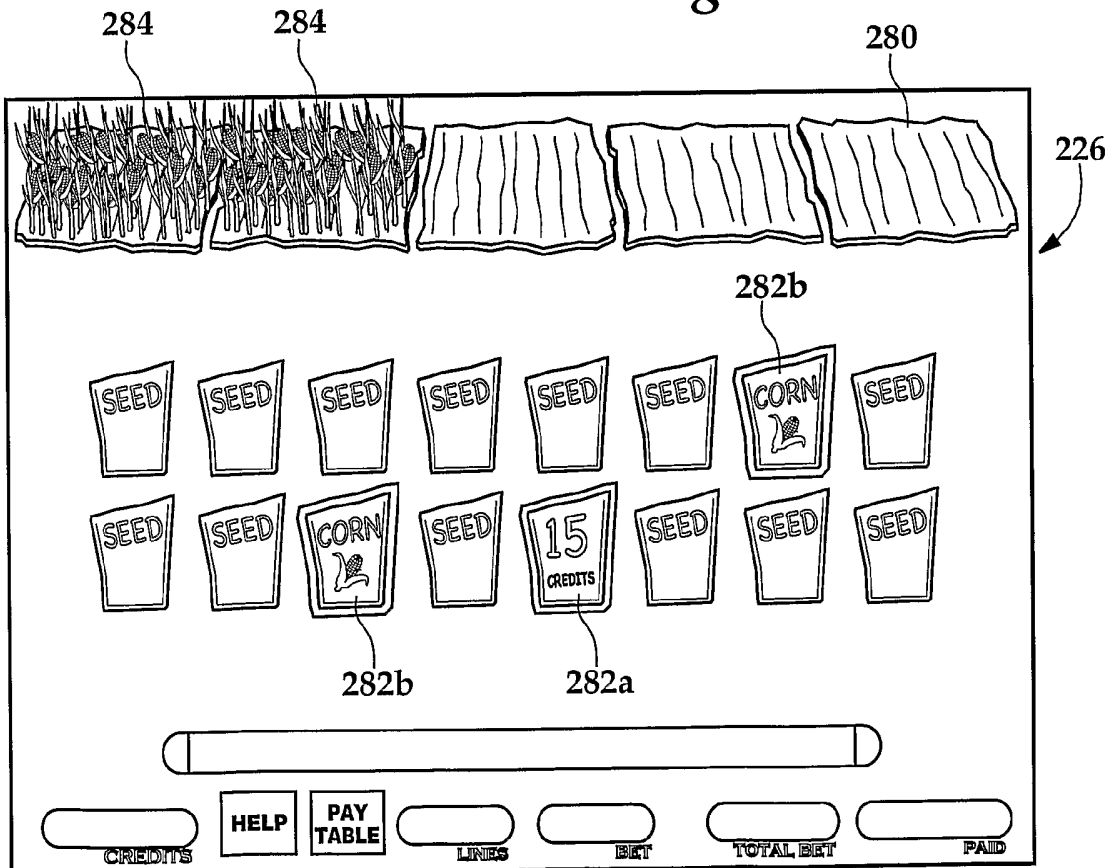


Fig. 9

9/12

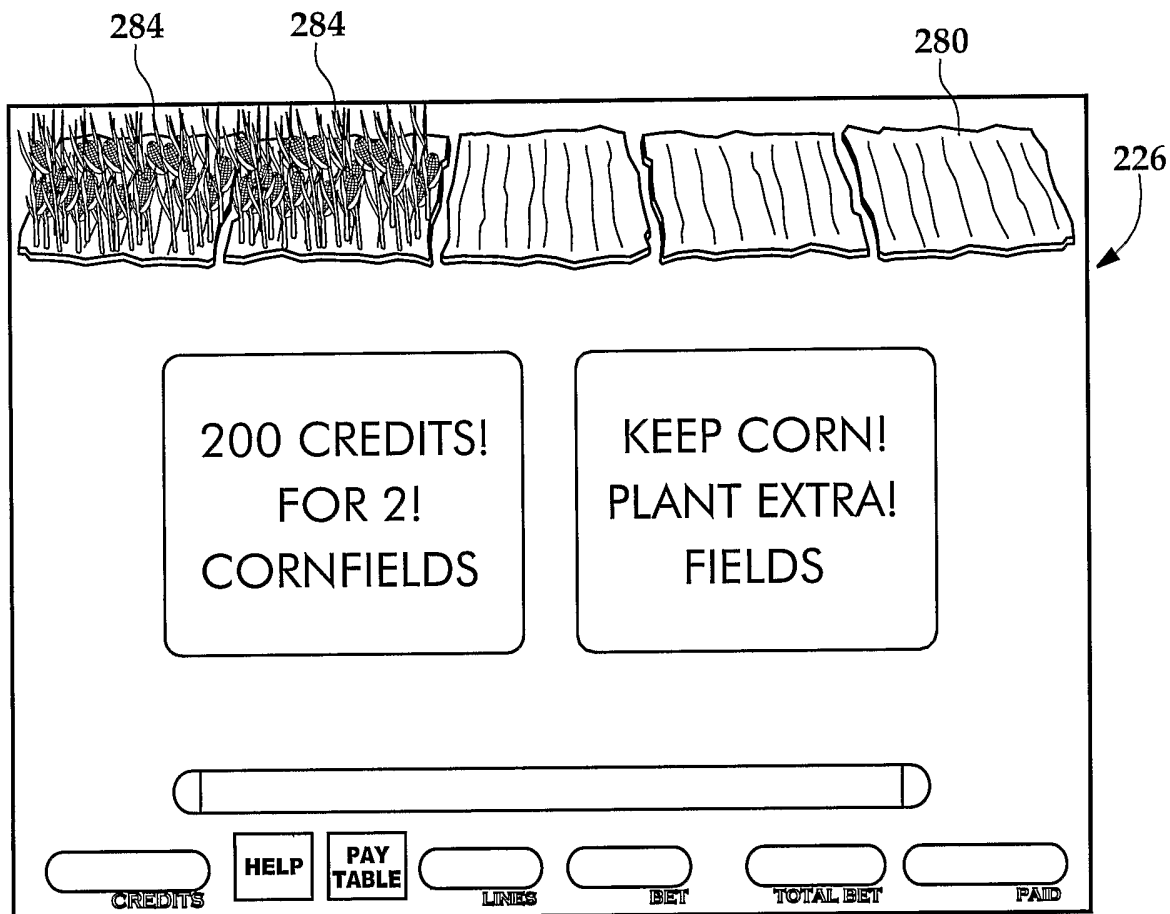


Fig.10

10/12

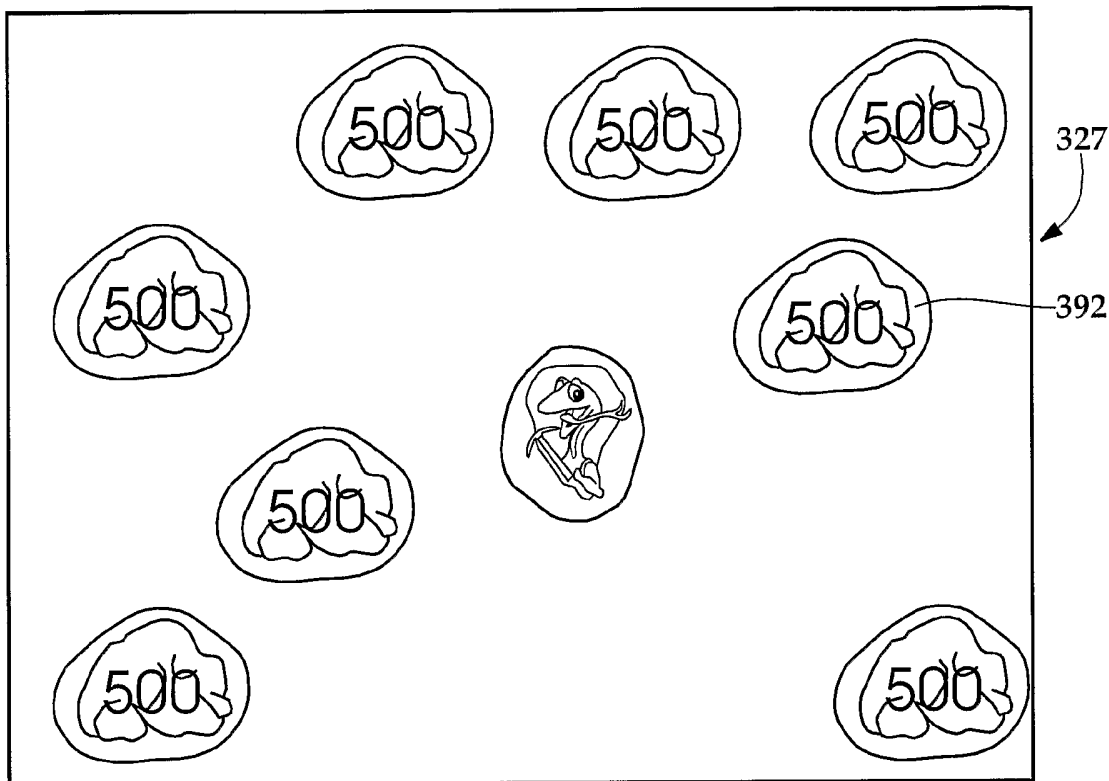


Fig.11a

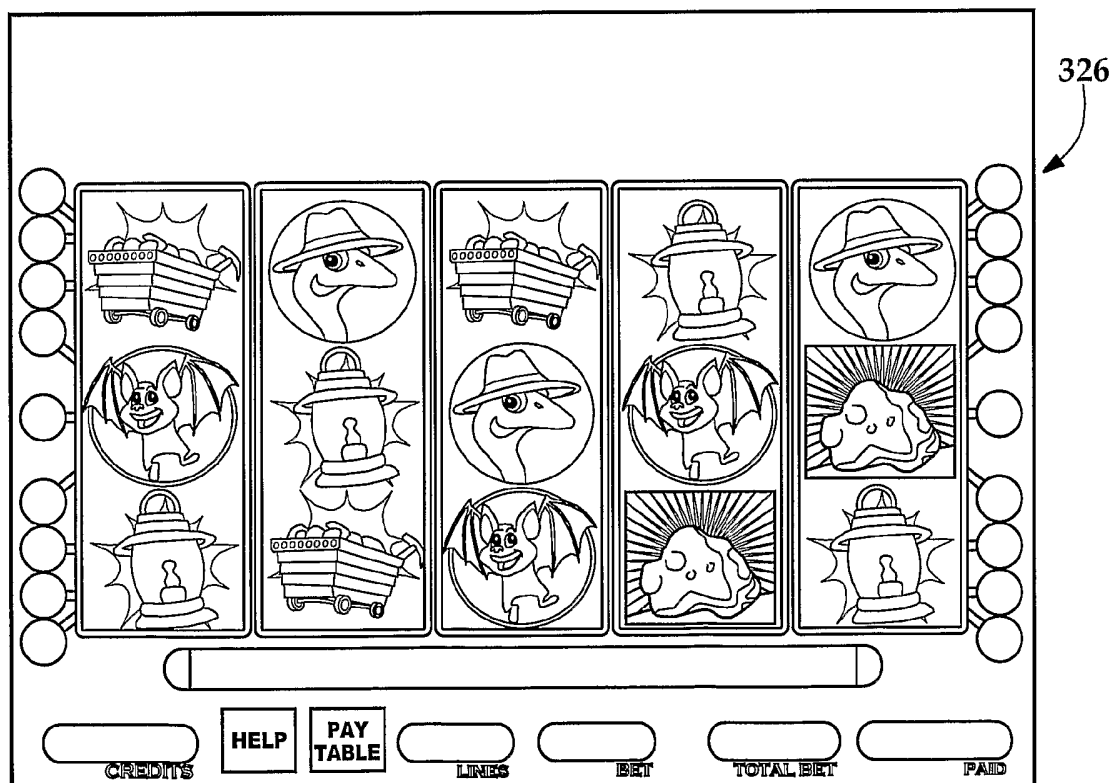


Fig.11b

11/12

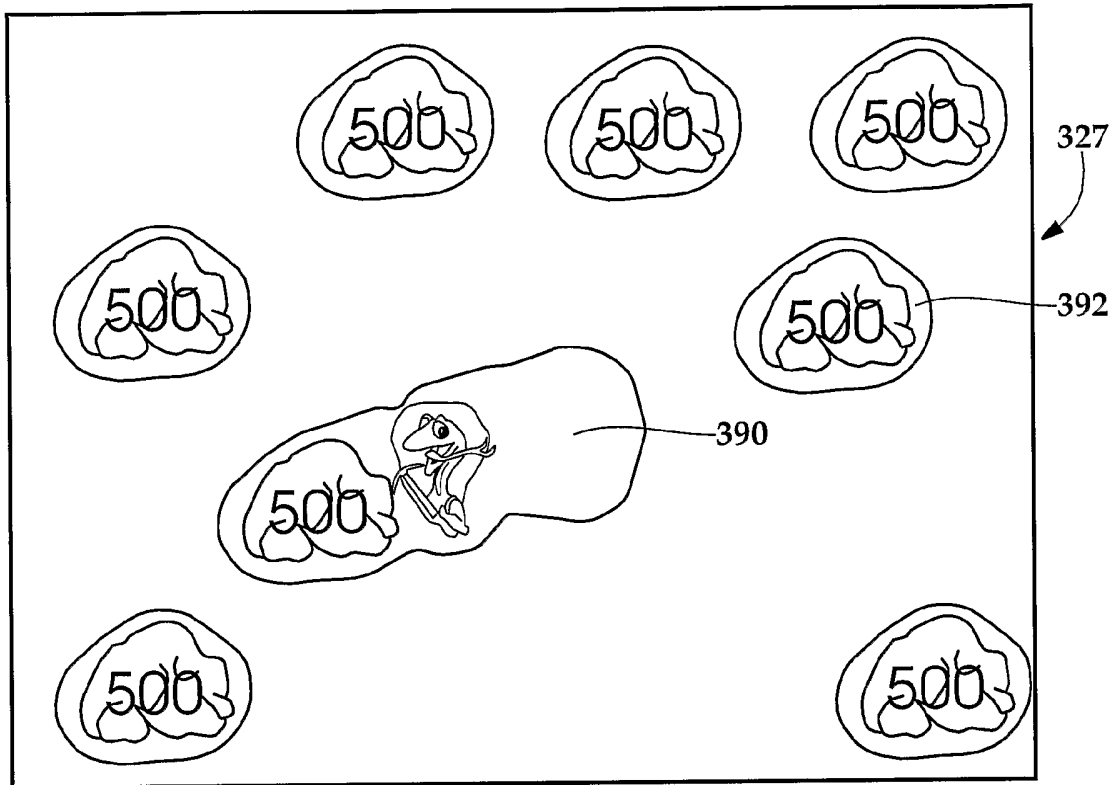


Fig.12a

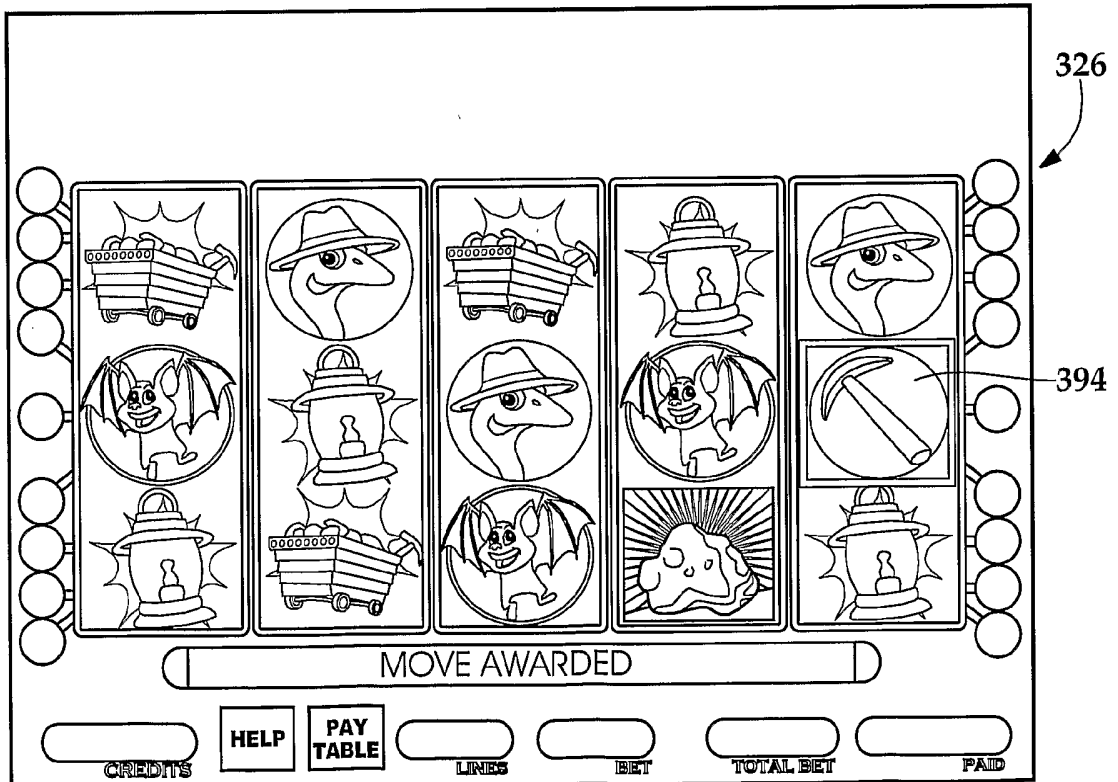


Fig.12b

12/12

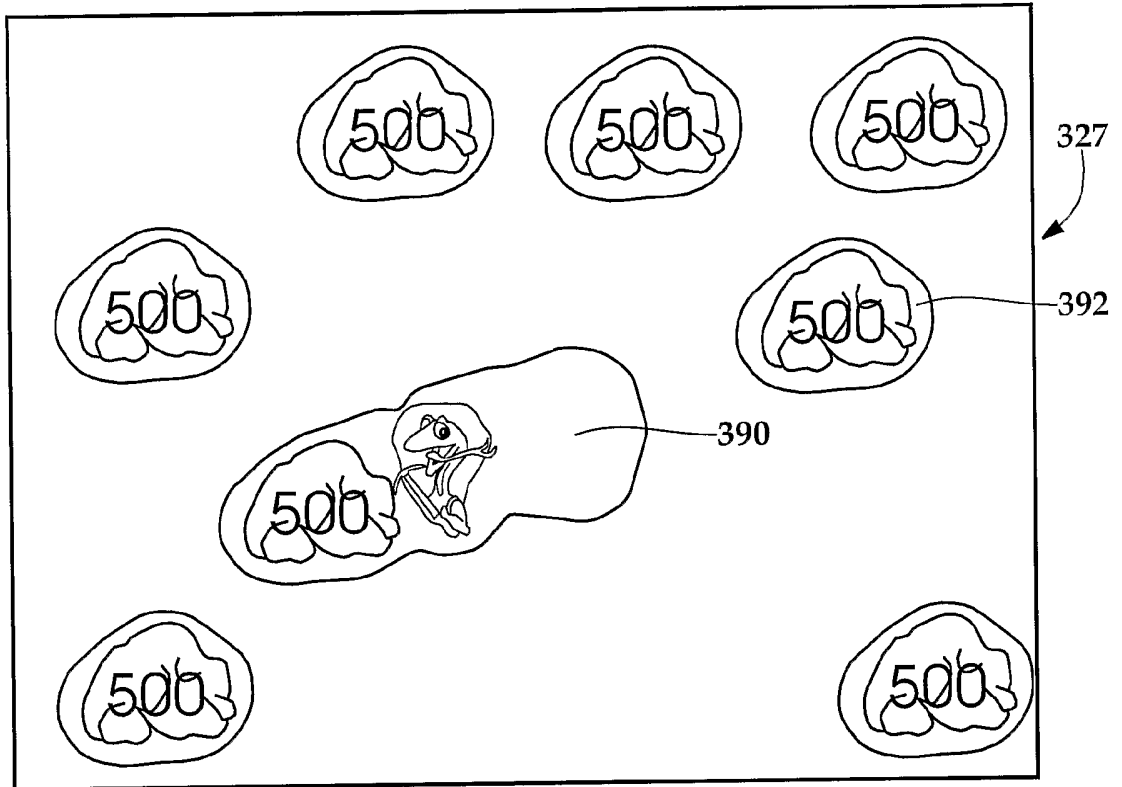


Fig.13a

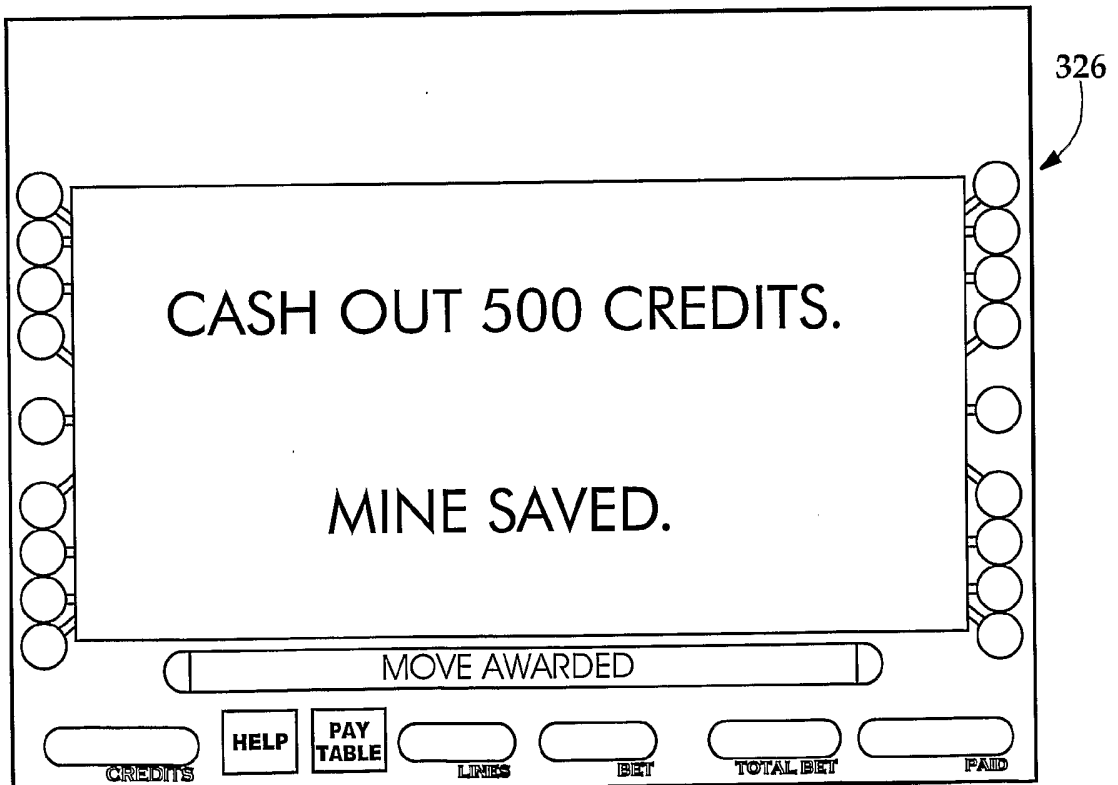
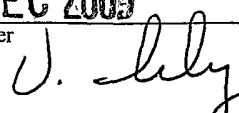


Fig.13b

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US05/23778

| <p>A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER</p> <p>IPC(7) : A63F 13/00</p> <p>US CL : 463/20</p> <p>According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC</p> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|---|--|---|--|--|---|--|---|--|-------------------------------------|---|--|------------------------|---|--|-------------|
| <p>B. FIELDS SEARCHED</p> <p>Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)</p> <p>U.S. : 463/16, 17, 19, 20</p> <p>Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched</p> <p>Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)</p> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <p>C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Category *</th> <th>Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages</th> <th>Relevant to claim No.</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>X</td> <td>US 2002/0077174 A1 (Luciano et al) 20 June 2002 (20.06.2002) Pages 4, 5, 6, Fig 1</td> <td>1, 15-19, 22, 23, 39-43, 46, 47, 49-56</td> </tr> <tr> <td>---</td> <td></td> <td>-----</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Y</td> <td></td> <td>2-14, 20, 21, 24, 26-38, 44, 45, 48</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Y</td> <td>US 6,311,976 B1 (Yoseloff et al.) 06 November 2001 (06.11.2001) Col 12 Lines 3 - 36.</td> <td>20, 21, 24, 44, 45, 48</td> </tr> <tr> <td>A</td> <td>US 2001/0024971 A1 (Brossard) 27 September 2001 (27.09.2001) Col 1- 14</td> <td>2-14, 26-38</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | | Category * | Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages | Relevant to claim No. | X | US 2002/0077174 A1 (Luciano et al) 20 June 2002 (20.06.2002) Pages 4, 5, 6, Fig 1 | 1, 15-19, 22, 23, 39-43, 46, 47, 49-56 | --- | | ----- | Y | | 2-14, 20, 21, 24, 26-38, 44, 45, 48 | Y | US 6,311,976 B1 (Yoseloff et al.) 06 November 2001 (06.11.2001) Col 12 Lines 3 - 36. | 20, 21, 24, 44, 45, 48 | A | US 2001/0024971 A1 (Brossard) 27 September 2001 (27.09.2001) Col 1- 14 | 2-14, 26-38 |
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| X | US 2002/0077174 A1 (Luciano et al) 20 June 2002 (20.06.2002) Pages 4, 5, 6, Fig 1 | 1, 15-19, 22, 23, 39-43, 46, 47, 49-56 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| <p><input type="checkbox"/> Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. <input type="checkbox"/> See patent family annex.</p> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <p>* Special categories of cited documents:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance</td> <td>"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention</td> </tr> <tr> <td>"E" earlier application or patent published on or after the international filing date</td> <td>"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone</td> </tr> <tr> <td>"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)</td> <td>"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art</td> </tr> <tr> <td>"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means</td> <td>"&" document member of the same patent family</td> </tr> <tr> <td>"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> | | "A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance | "T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention | "E" earlier application or patent published on or after the international filing date | "X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone | "L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified) | "Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art | "O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means | "&" document member of the same patent family | "P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed | | | | | | | | | |
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| "O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means | "&" document member of the same patent family | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| "P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <p>Date of the actual completion of the international search</p> <p>08 November 2005 (08.11.2005)</p> | <p>Date of mailing of the international search report</p> <p>27 DEC 2005</p> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <p>Name and mailing address of the ISA/US</p> <p>Mail Stop PCT, Attn: ISA/US</p> <p>Commissioner for Patents</p> <p>P.O. Box 1450</p> <p>Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450</p> <p>Facsimile No. (571) 273-3201</p> | <p>Authorized officer</p> <p><i>For</i> </p> <p>Xuan Thai</p> <p>Telephone No. (571) 272-7147</p> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |