United States Patent [19]

Reese

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[54] **INFLATABLE ORNAMENTAL DEVICE**

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[52] **U.S. Cl.**..... **240/10 C**, 240/10 F, 240/10 R

[51] **Int. Cl.**..... **A47g 33/00**

[58] **Field of Search** ..... 46/87, 88, 90; 240/10 C, 240/10 R, 10 F

[56] **References Cited**

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[57] **ABSTRACT**

An envelope which simulates a figure when inflated has a transparent bottom wall and is connected to an upstanding base adjacent the bottom wall. A lamp within the base projects light upwardly through the base, through the bottom wall, and into the figure. The base is collapsible.

8 Claims, 8 Drawing Figures

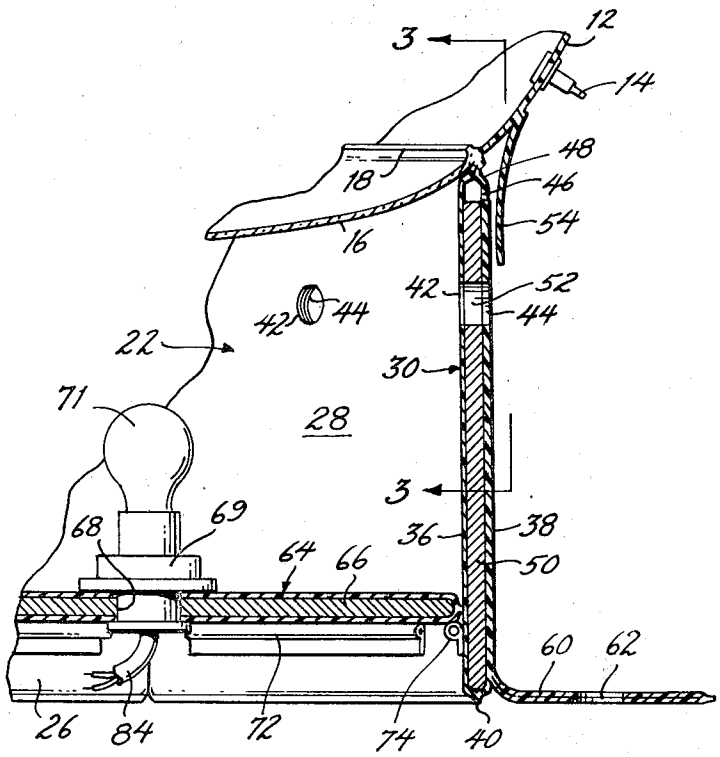


Fig. 1.

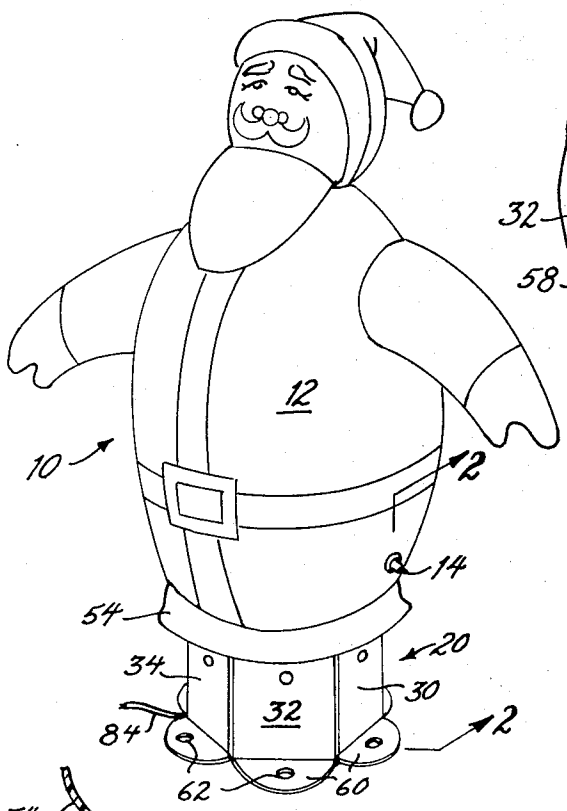
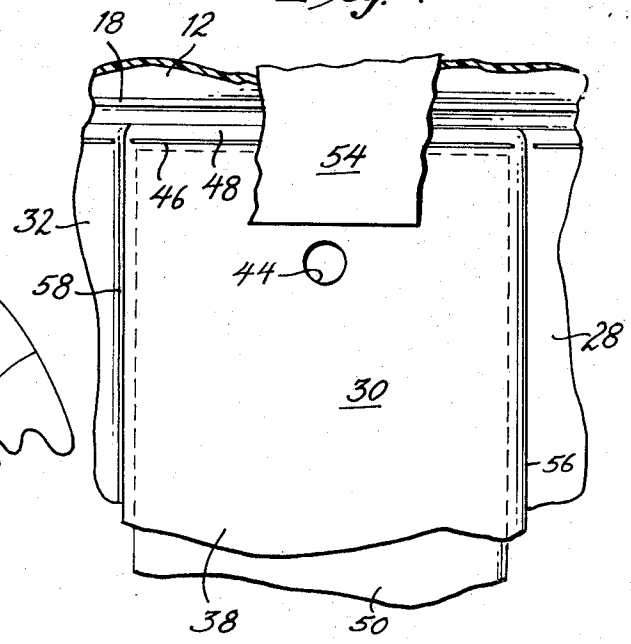


Fig. 3.



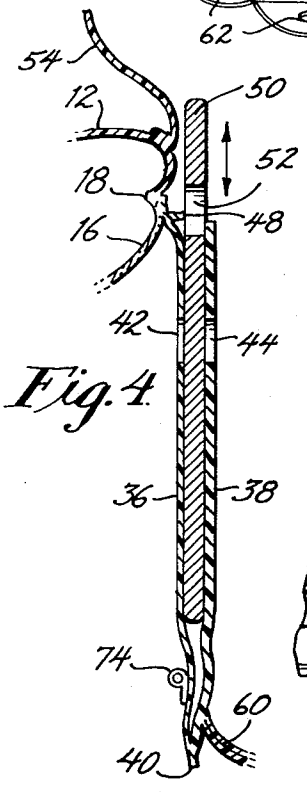


Fig. 4.

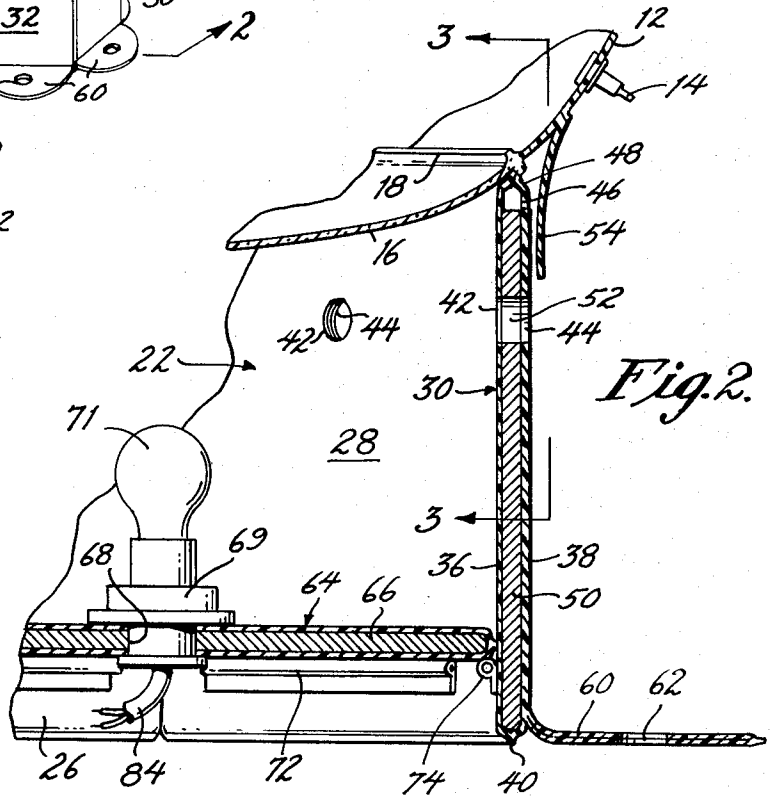


Fig. 2.

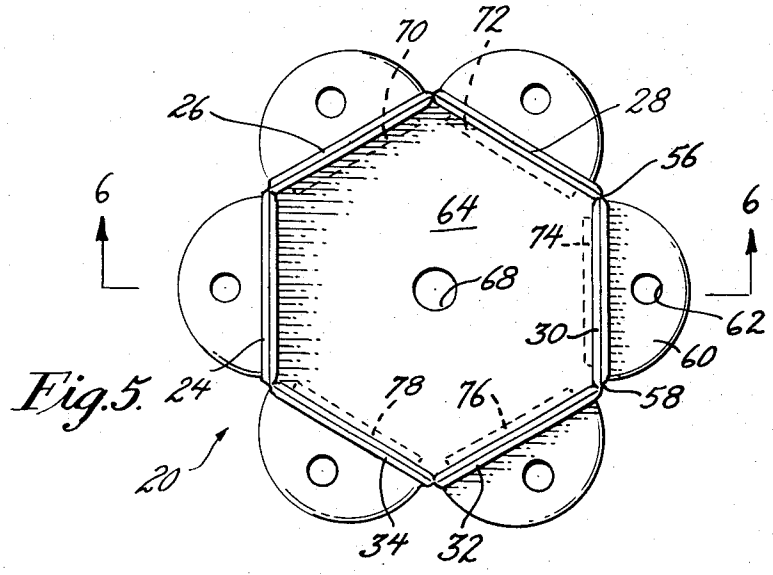


Fig. 5.

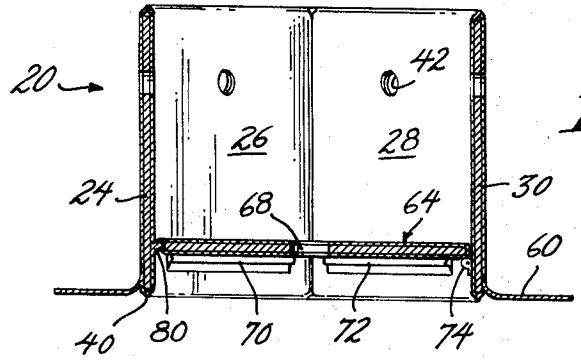


Fig. 6.

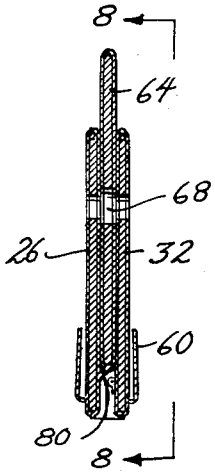


Fig. 7.

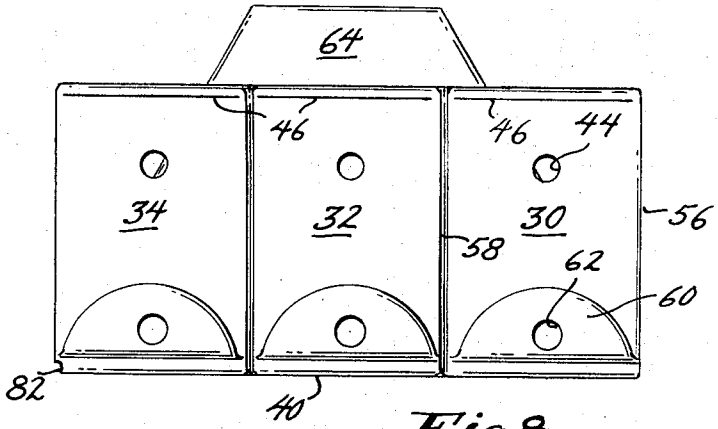


Fig. 8.

INFLATABLE ORNAMENTAL DEVICE

The present invention is directed to an inflatable ornamental figure which may assume a wide variety of configurations. Thus, the figure may be a Santa Claus, a snowman, a Mother Goose character, a clown, a Christmas tree, a candle, etc. The device is self-supporting since the inflatable envelope is connected to a base which supports the figure when inflated. The device may be used indoors or outdoors.

For the purposes of the present disclosure, the inflatable figure is illustrated as a Santa Claus. The figure envelope is preferably made from an opaque plastic material. Various portions of the figure such as the face, belt, etc. of the Santa Claus may be provided with luminous paint which glows when the interior of the figure is illuminated. Alternatively, various portions of the figure may be transparent to obtain a particular effect from the internal illumination of the figure. For example, the flame portion of candles painted on a Christmas tree figure may be best portrayed by making them transparent. If desired, the entire figure may initially be of transparent plastic with portions thereof painted so as to render the portions opaque and create different illuminating effects due to the difference in color and paint applied to the envelope.

For storage purposes, the base is preferably collapsible. Hence, when the figure is deflated and the base collapsed, minimum storage space is required. When the figure is utilized outdoors, extensions on the base overlie the ground and holes in such extensions facilitate the use of pegs which will prevent the figure from being blown over by the wind. All exposed portions of the device of the present invention are of non-corrosive material so as not to interfere with the ability of the device to remain outdoors for extended periods under varying weather conditions.

It is an object of the present invention to provide a novel inflatable ornamental device adapted to be internally illuminated.

It is another object of the present invention to provide an ornamental device which is adapted to be collapsed for purposes of storage.

Other objects will appear hereinafter.

For the purpose of illustrating the invention, there is shown in the drawings a form which is presently preferred; it being understood, however, that this invention is not limited to the precise arrangements and instrumentalities shown.

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of an ornamental device in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. 2 is a sectional view taken along the line 2—2 in FIG. 1.

FIG. 3 is a sectional view taken along the line 3—3 in FIG. 2.

FIG. 4 is a fragmentary sectional view through a typical side panel of the base showing the insertion of the reinforcement member.

FIG. 5 is a top plan view of the base.

FIG. 6 is a sectional view taken along the line 6—6 in FIG. 5.

FIG. 7 is a sectional view through a base in a collapsed condition.

FIG. 8 is an elevation view taken along the line 8—8 in FIG. 7.

Referring to the drawing in detail, wherein like numerals indicate like elements, there is shown in FIG. 1 an ornamental device in accordance with the present

invention designated generally as **10.** The device **10** includes an inflatable envelope of polymeric plastic material depicting the figure of a Santa Claus. The envelope is inflated or deflated by means of the valve **14** which may be located in any desired location on the figure. The envelope **12** may be painted or pigmented so as to display portions of the figure in different colors. Portions of the figure may be painted to depict structure such as the belt on the Santa Claus, the face components, etc.

The envelope **12** is provided with a translucent bottom wall **16** which may be transparent polymeric plastic such as vinyl. The periphery of the bottom wall **16** is heat-sealed to the periphery of the envelope **12** at the heat-sealed joint **18.** The inflated figure is supported by an upstanding base **20** having an annular wall **22** connected to the envelope **12** so as to be aligned with the bottom wall **16.** The connection between the envelope **12** and the upper end of the base **20** is preferably attained adjacent to or slightly beyond the periphery of the wall **16.** A variety of different means may be utilized to interconnect the envelope **12** and the base **20.**

As illustrated, the base **20** is preferably collapsible and the annular wall **22** comprised of a plurality of wall panels **24, 26, 28, 30, 32** and **34.** Each wall panel is hinged to the next adjacent wall panel. In the preferred embodiment, the annular wall **22** is hexagonal as shown more clearly in FIG. **5.** However, the configuration of the annular wall **22** may assume a wide variety of other shapes.

Since each of the wall panels of the base **20** is identical, only wall panel **30** will be described in detail. It will be understood that corresponding structure is provided on each of the panels of the base **20.**

The panel **30** is comprised of an inner layer **36** of polymeric plastic material joined at its lower end by a heat-sealed joint **40** to the lower end of an outer layer **38.** Layer **38** is substantially thicker than layer **36.** For example, layer **38** may be of **20** gauge vinyl while layer **36** is **8** gauge vinyl.

The layer **36** has a hole **42** therein in the upper third of the panel. Likewise, layer **38** has a similar hole **44** which is adapted to be aligned with the hole **42.** The upper end of the layer **36** is heat-sealed to the envelope **12** adjacent the heat-sealed joint **18** to thereby interconnect the envelope **12** with the base. Integral with the upper end of the layer **36,** there is provided a lip **48** which forms a part of the layer **38** but is spaced therefrom by the slit **46.**

The slit **46** facilitates the introduction of a reinforcing layer **50** into the space between the layers **36** and **38.** Layer **50** may be any one of a wide variety of materials. I prefer to use an inexpensive rigid layer of pressed paperboard. Layer **50** has a hole **52** adapted to be aligned with the holes **42** and **44.** An annular skirt **54** has its upper end joined to the envelope **12** in any manner such as by heat-sealing. The lower edge of the skirt **54** is sufficient to overlie and conceal the slit **46.** See FIGS. **2** and **3.**

The layers **36** and **38** extend around the entire base **20.** In between the reinforcement layers and each of the panels **24–34,** the layers **36** and **38** are heat-sealed together so as to form a flexible joint. The heat-sealed joint between the panels **28** and **30** is identified as **56.** The heat-sealed joint between the panels **32** and **30** is identified as **58.**

Each of the panels is provided with a flap or extension to facilitate securing the device in place on the ground outdoors. Each of the flaps is identical. The flap on panel **30** is designated as **60** and is generally semicircular with the chord heat-sealed to the layer **38** at a location which is slightly above the heat-sealed joint **40.** The flap **60** is provided with a hole **62** through which a peg may be inserted into the ground so as to prevent the device from being tipped over by the wind, dogs, children, etc. When the device is used indoors, the flaps may be turned inwardly under the heat-sealed joint **40** so as to be beneath the base. Alternatively, a weighted object may be placed over the flaps to provide further stability and prevent the device from inadvertently being tipped over.

As shown more clearly in FIG. **2,** the base **20** is provided with a bottom wall positioned at its lower end but spaced upwardly from the heat-sealed joint **40.** The bottom wall is designated as **64** and constitutes a means for supporting a lamp within the base. The bottom **64** is preferably constructed in the same manner as the panel described above so as to be rigid with a reinforcement layer **66** therewithin. Wall **64** is provided with a hole **68** in a central portion thereof for receiving the socket **69** of a lamp **71.**

The bottom wall **64** preferably has a peripheral contour corresponding to the shape of the base. One side of the bottom wall **64** is joined to one of the panels. As illustrated, one side of the wall **64** is connected to panel **24** by a heat-sealed joint **80.** Each of the remaining panels is provided with a support member to support the periphery of the bottom wall **64.**

A support member **70** is secured to the inner surface of panel **66** in any convenient manner such as by heat-sealing. In like manner, support member **72** is secured to the inner periphery of panel **28,** support member **74** is secured to the inner periphery of panel **30,** support member **76** is supported at the inner periphery of panel **32,** and support member **78** is secured to the inner periphery of panel **34.**

Each of the support members **70–78** is mounted in a position so as to be spaced upwardly from the lower edge of the base **20.** Each support member is preferably a hollow tube having a tab joined to its respective panel. The hollow tube portion of the support members will support the weight of the bottom wall **64** but will also permit the bottom wall **64** to be pivoted downwardly about the joint **80** when sufficient pressure is applied thereto. For purposes of collapsing the base **20,** the wall **64** may pivot upwardly to the position shown in FIG. **7** or may be pivoted downwardly. Pivotable movement in either of these directions is accommodated by the heat-sealed joint **80.** The heat-sealed joint between any two adjacent panels may be provided with a notch at the lower peripheral edge of the base **20** to accommodate the electrical wires **84.** Thus, the heat-sealed joint between panels **24** and **26** is provided with a notch **82** as shown in FIG. **8** so that the wires **84** may be extended to a source of electricity.

When the envelope **12** is inflated so as to provide a recognizable figure such as the Santa Claus, the lamp **71** may be lit. Light from the lamp **71** projects upwardly through the base **20** and through the bottom wall **16** so as to illuminate the interior of the figure. In order not to unduly heat the bottom wall **16** by the heat generated by the lamp **71,** the air holes in each of the panels of the base **20** facilitate dissipating the heat. It will be noted that the air holes, such as the holes **42, 44** and **52** are in the upper third of the base **20.** When the device **10** is mounted outdoors, the wind may blow through the holes in the base **20** to facilitate cooling the interior of the base.

The lamp **71** may be a conventional lamp. Alternatively, the lamp **71** may be a flicker lamp which simulates a flickering flame or may be a lamp which rapidly turns on and off. If the figure is a large candle, the unique effect is attained by the use of a flickering lamp. If the device **10** is used as an advertising display, the use of a lamp which rapidly turns on and off will attract the attention of people passing by.

The device of the present invention may assume a wide variety of sizes. In the preferred embodiment, the base has a height of about 10 inches and the inflated envelope has a height of about 4 feet.

Each of the polymeric plastic materials mentioned above preferably has a suitable plasticizer or other component to confer good low temperature characteristics so as not to be brittle in freezing weather. Those skilled in the art are familiar with such plasticizers or other components. While the materials above refer to the use of vinyl, such as polyvinyl chloride, other polymeric materials may be used. While wall **16** is preferably transparent, it may be a translucent material such as red-tinted clear vinyl.

The present invention may be embodied in other specific forms without departing from the spirit or essential attributes thereof and, accordingly, reference should be made to the appended claims, rather than to the foregoing specification as indicating the scope of the invention.

I claim:

1. An ornamental device comprising an inflatable envelope depicting a figure when inflated, said envelope having a translucent bottom wall, a base having an upstanding annular wall, said base having its upper end connected to said envelope so that the upper end of said base is aligned with said translucent bottom wall and supports the figure when the latter is inflated, said base having air holes between its upper end and its lower end, means to support a lamp within the base adjacent the lower end of the base so that light can project upwardly through the base and through the translucent bottom wall into the figure when inflated, the periphery of the bottom wall of the envelope being heat-sealed to the periphery of the figure portion of the envelope, said base being multisided and collapsible, and the upper end of said base surrounding the periphery of said envelope bottom wall.

2. A device in accordance with claim **1** wherein said lamp support means is a bottom wall of said base, one side of said base bottom wall being pivotably connected to the juxtaposed portion of the base.

3. An ornamental device comprising an inflatable envelope depicting a figure when inflated, said envelope having a translucent bottom wall, a base having an upstanding annular wall, said base having its upper end connected to said envelope so that the upper end of said base is aligned with said translucent bottom wall and supports the figure when the latter is inflated, said base having air holes between its upper end and its lower end, means to support a lamp within the base adjacent the lower end of the base so that light can project upwardly through the base and through the translucent bottom wall into the figure when inflated,

the periphery of the bottom wall of the envelope being heat-sealed to the periphery of the figure portion of the envelope, the upper end of said base surrounding the periphery of said envelope bottom wall, said base being multisided and including a plurality of panels connected together, each panel having an inner and outer layer of polymeric plastic material with a reinforcing rigid layer therebetween.

4. A device in accordance with claim **3** wherein the outer layer of polymeric material on each panel is substantially thicker than the inner layer on each panel.

5. An ornamental device comprising an inflatable envelope depicting a figure when inflated, said envelope having a translucent bottom wall, the base having an upstanding annular wall, said base having its upper end connected to said envelope so that the upper end of the base is aligned with said translucent bottom wall and supports the inflated figure, said base having air holes between its upper end and its lower end, means to support a lamp within the base annular wall adjacent the lower end of the base so that light can project upwardly through the base and through the translucent bottom wall into the inflated figure, said envelope having a skirt, the lower end of said skirt overlapping the upper end of said base and being free from attachment with said base.

6. An ornamental device comprising an inflatable envelope, said envelope having a bottom wall at least a portion of which is translucent, a base having an upstanding annular wall, means coupling said envelope to an end portion of said base for support by the base, the interior of the base being aligned with said translucent portion of the bottom wall of the envelope, the envelope when inflated having a height substantially greater than the height of said base, means to support a lamp within the base so that light from the lamp can project through the base and through the translucent portion of the envelope bottom wall into the envelope, said lamp supporting means being adjacent to the end of the base remote from the envelope, and said base including a plurality of panels pivotably connected together to facilitate collapsing the base when not in use.

7. A device in accordance with claim **6** wherein said lamp supporting means includes a bottom wall of the base, one edge of said bottom wall being pivotably connected to said base, said base being comprised of rigid panels, and said base bottom wall being a rigid panel.

8. An ornamental device comprising an inflatable envelope having portions delineated by paint-like material applied thereto, said envelope having a bottom wall at least a portion of which is translucent, a base which is multi-sided and collapsible, said base having an annular wall containing air holes, said annular wall having a thickness which is substantially greater than the thickness of said envelope bottom wall, means coupling said envelope to an end portion of said base for support by the base, the interior of the base being aligned with said translucent portion of the bottom wall of the envelope, the envelope when inflated having a height in transverse dimensions substantially greater than the height and transverse dimensions of said base, means to support a lamp within the base so that light from the lamp can project through the base and through the translucent portion of the envelope bottom wall into the envelope, and said lamp supporting means being adjacent to the end of the base remote from said envelope.

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