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[54] **GAME APPARATUS**
5 Claims, 5 Drawing Figs.

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273/138
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131 B

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ABSTRACT: Apparatus for playing a reflex game including an elevated playing board simulating the surface of the moon having apertures therethrough and a platform mounted beneath the playing surface and movable relative to the board to a position underlying the apertures. The platform is releasably latched in a biased position underlying the apertures and astronaut figure playing pieces are positioned in the apertures and supported on the platform while in its latched position. The platform latch is adapted to be released by a player chosen by random chance means, thereby allowing the astronaut figures to fall through the moon surface.

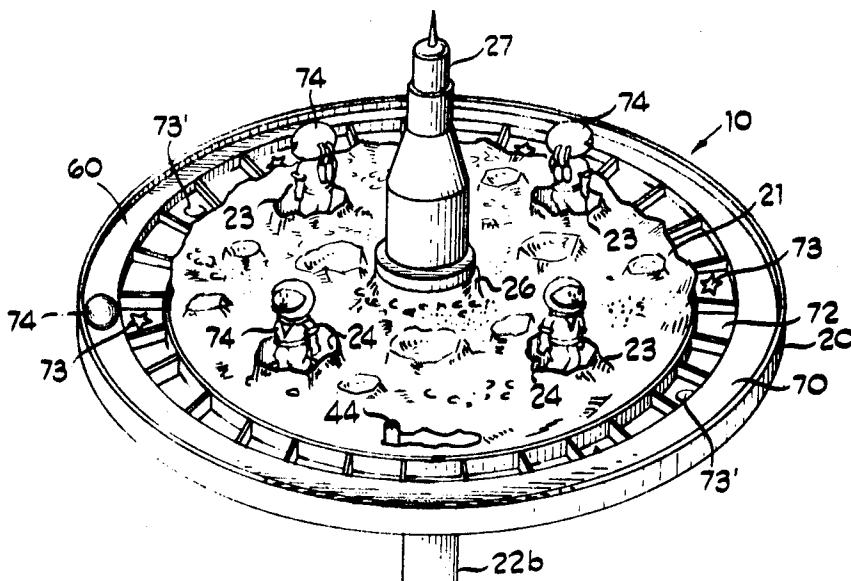


Fig 4

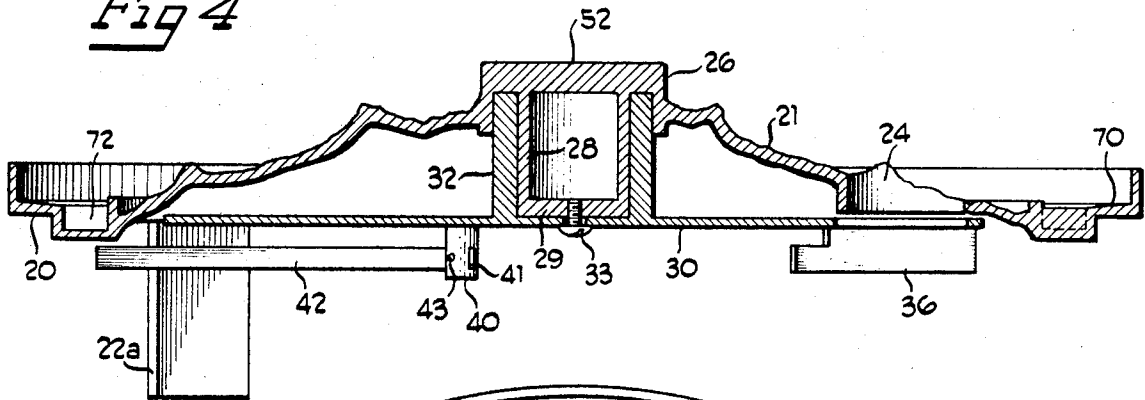
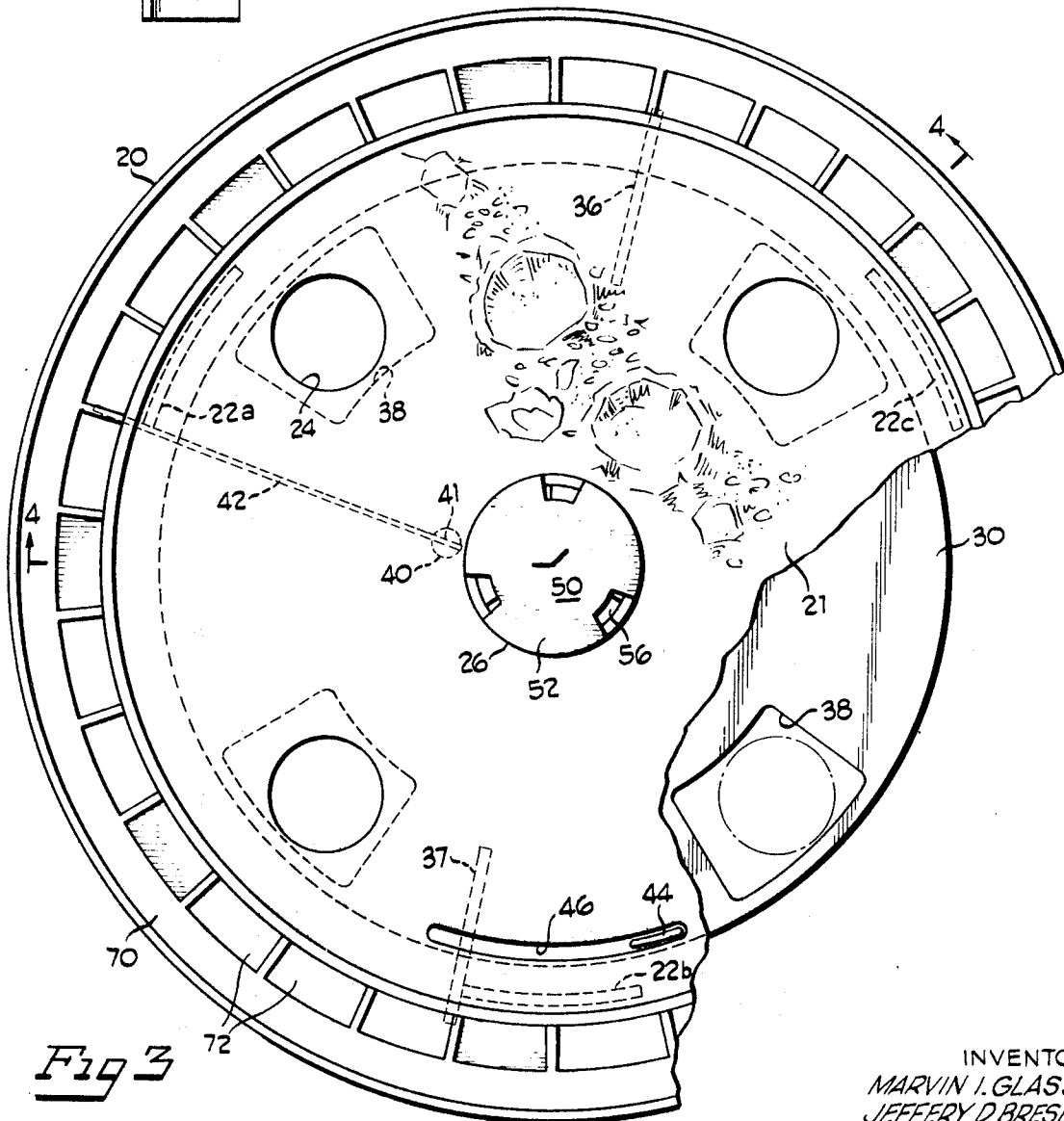
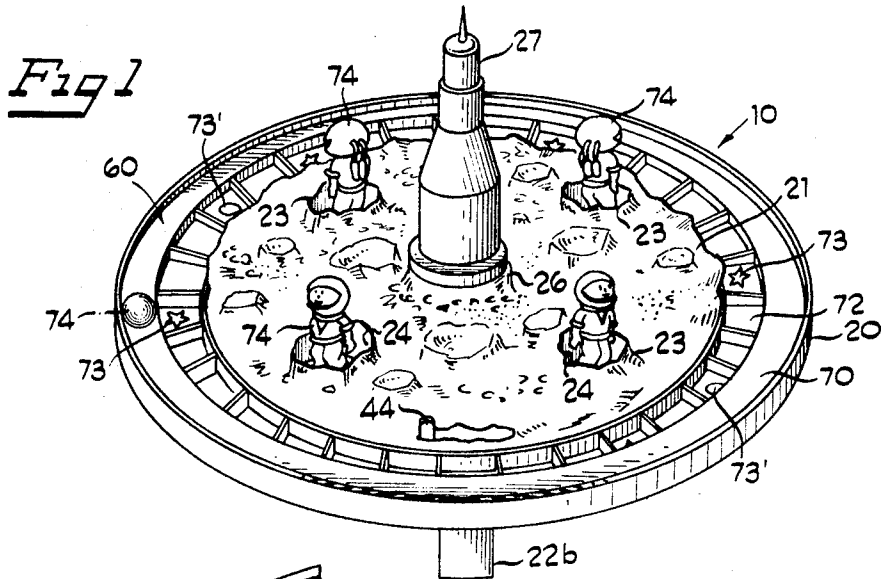
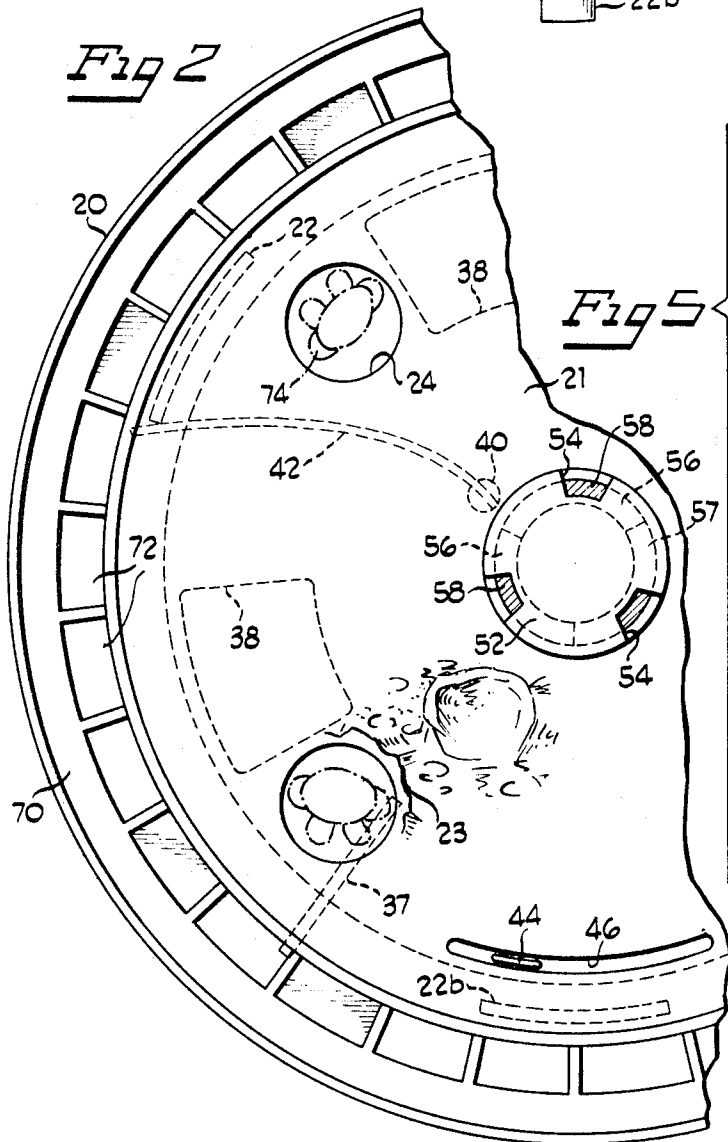
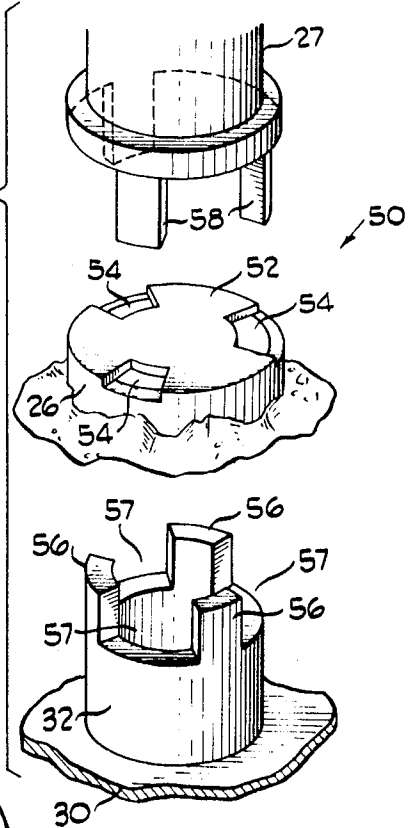


Fig 3

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GAME APPARATUS

This invention relates in general to games of chance which require rapid player recognition and skillful, immediate player reaction.

Conventional games typically involve one or more elements of chance with little or no opportunity for the participating players to utilize their skills in rapid recognition of particular game situations and quickly reacting to the situation presented, to the player's benefit.

The game apparatus of this invention comprises random chance means, the result of which must be recognized by each of the players, and wherein the players must react to the situation presented by the chance means. In each round of the game, one particular player as determined by the chance means is pitted against the remaining players and attempts to win playing pieces from the remaining players.

Accordingly, a primary object of this invention is to provide game apparatus usable by a plurality of players, wherein play of the game requires rapid player recognition of game situations which are particularly beneficial to the player.

Another object of this invention is to provide game apparatus wherein play of the game requires rapid player recognition of game situations beneficial to the player and quick, skillful reaction to the situation to win, or to prevent from losing a game playing piece.

Additional objects of this invention will become apparent to those versed in the art upon an understanding of the following description of the construction of the game apparatus taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which a preferred embodiment of the apparatus is shown, and wherein:

FIG. 1 is a three-dimensional, top perspective view of the game apparatus of the invention;

FIG. 2 is an enlarged fragmentary, top plan view of the game apparatus shown in FIG. 1, with parts broken away and omitted, showing the turntable of the apparatus in a given position;

FIG. 3 is a fragmentary, top plan view, generally similar to that of FIG. 2 but with the turntable in another position;

FIG. 4 is an elevational, cross-sectional view of the game apparatus taken along line 4-4 of FIG. 3; and

FIG. 5 is a slightly enlarged, exploded, perspective view of the catch and release mechanism of the game apparatus.

Referring not to FIGS. 1 and 3, the game apparatus, generally referred to by reference number 10, comprises an elevated, circular frame 20 supported by three legs 22a, 22b and 22c. Interior of the circle defined by the frame, and preferably formed integral therewith, is a three-dimensional playing board having a surface 21 is provided which desirably simulates the appearance of the lunar terrain such as may be found by astronauts traveling to the moon. The playing surface includes a plurality of spaced-apart simulated craters 23 having interior apertures 24 which extend through the board, and also includes a raised central area 26 which simulates a launching pad for a simulated space vehicle or rocket 27.

As best seen in FIG. 4, the raised area includes an integral, depending, cylindrical member having sidewalls 28 and a bottom wall 29 supporting an underlying, circular platform or turntable 30 which also underlies the playing surface. The turntable includes an upwardly extending concentric cylindrical flange 32 which cooperates with the exterior of sidewalls 28 and is loosely secured to bottom wall 29 by a threaded fastener 33 or other suitable means. The loose support of the turntable enables it to be pivotably moved relative to the playing surface.

Referring to FIGS. 2 and 3, turntable 30 defines a plurality of circumferentially spaced-apart openings 38, equal to the number of apertures 23, which are positioned so that openings 38 are aligned with apertures 24 when the turntable is in a given position. When the turntable is in a second position spaced-apart openings 38 are not aligned with the apertures in

the playing surface, but rather, the apertures are covered by the underlying turntable member.

As particularly seen in FIG. 2, the turntable is in the position whereat openings 38 are not aligned with apertures 24. In this position, the turntable is capable of supporting objects, such as playing pieces, which may be placed in the craters. On the other hand, with the turntable in the position as seen in FIG. 3, with the openings and apertures aligned, the turntable is incapable of supporting objects which may have been previously in the craters. These objects will fall through the apertures in the playing board, thereby simulating loss of the object through the moon's surface.

Referring now to FIGS. 2, 3 and 4, a depending stud 40 is fixedly secured to the underside of the turntable, intermediate its pivot point and its peripheral edge. Stud 40 includes a radially oriented vertical slot 41 for receiving a horizontally extending flat metal spring 42 which reaches from the stud to beyond a supporting leg such as leg 22a. The spring is staked to the stud by a suitable fastener 43. A spring cocking lever 44 is secured to the upper surface of the turntable and extends vertically upwardly through an arcuate slot 46 formed through the playing surface, adjacent the periphery thereof. Lever 44 allows the player to pivot the turntable in a clockwise direction as seen in FIGS. 2 and 3, which causes the outer portion of spring 42 to engage leg 22a and biases the turntable for movement in the opposite, or counterclockwise direction. The turntable may be temporarily locked in the biased position illustrated in FIG. 2 by a releasable restraining mechanism, such as a catch means 50 housed within the raised central area 26, as will be described below.

Two limit stops 36 and 37 are fixedly secured to the underside of the turntable adjacent its periphery. Limit stop 36 is secured to the turntable at a location which enables it to cooperate with leg 22c when the turntable is being cocked by lever 44 to prevent excess stress from being imposed upon the lever. The other limit stop 37 is positioned so that it cooperates with leg 22b when the restraining means are released to prevent the movement of the turntable caused by spring 42 from imposing excess strain on lever 44.

Turning now to FIGS. 4 and 5, catch means 50 includes a planar base 52 formed at the upper surface or raised central area 26. Base 52 defines a series of equally spaced peripheral slots 54 which extend through the base and communicate with the hollow interior of the raised area. The cylindrical flange 32 of the turntable includes a series of integral, upwardly extending vertical fingers 56 about the periphery which are equally spaced apart and define open spaces 57 therebetween. The fingers are spaced to coincide with slots 54 when the turntable is in the position shown in FIG. 3. As noted above, in this position, spring 42 is in its relaxed state.

The spaces 57 are positioned to coincide with slots 54 when the turntable is in the position shown in FIG. 2 with the spring in its tensed or cocked state. In the latter position, namely that shown in FIG. 2, a plurality of depending latching tabs 58 may be inserted through slots 54 and into spaces 57 to cooperate with fingers 50 and base 52 for preventing pivotal movement of the turntable against biasing of the spring. The latching tabs are secured to the bottom of a simulated space vehicle which is sized for convenient grasping by the players and which is adapted for bodily removal from the launching pad by a selected player during each round of the game.

Upon removal of the space vehicle, the biasing of spring 42 quickly pivots the turntable from its cocked position of FIG. 2, whereat the turntable is capable of supporting an object positioned in craters 23, to an uncocked position as seen in FIG. 3 whereat the turntable openings 38 coincide with apertures 24 in the playing surface so as not to afford support for a playing piece positioned in the craters.

The game apparatus 10 includes chance means 60 which generally simulate a roulette wheel and are located in an annular area between the outer periphery of the circular playing surface 12 and the frame 20. The chance means include an outer circular path 70 inclined toward the center of the play-

ing surface, and a plurality of closely spaced, circumferentially disposed, player identifiable, indicia bearing pockets 72 inwardly of the path. A spherical object 74, such as a marble, is provided for circular movement about the path. As the velocity of the marble along the path decreases, it will eventually randomly fall into one of the indicia bearing pockets 72. Preferably, the pocket indicia comprises a number of colors equal to the number of players, such as four different colors for four players. Also, in the preferred embodiment, several pockets have nonplayer associated indicia, such as stars 73 and white dots 73', which have special significance to the play of the game as will be described in detail hereinafter.

The game apparatus also includes a plurality of playing pieces 74, which in keeping with the theme of the game, simulate astronaut figures. The playing pieces are desirably colored so that there are an equal number of playing pieces bearing each of the indicia colors of the pockets 72.

Prior to the play of the game each player receives a given number of playing pieces, such as five, comprising all of the playing pieces of that color. Each player now has a color by which he may be identified. As noted above, each of these colors are duplicated in the pockets 72 of the chance means and when the marble falls into a pocket bearing a player's color, the player identifying with that color is required to perform a particular act.

Prior to the play of the game, the space vehicle 27 is placed on the launching pad 26 with latching tabs 58 in slots 54, seated on the top edges of fingers 56. The cocking lever 44 is now moved clockwise, thus pivoting the turntable so that openings 38 are not aligned with apertures 23, biasing spring 42 and moving fingers 56 out of interference with slots 54 to enable tabs 58 to drop through slots 54 and into spaces 50. With the tabs in place, lever 44 may be released and the catch mechanism 50 prevents the turntable from pivoting counterclockwise, thus maintaining the nonalignment of openings 38 with apertures 24. Each of the players then places a playing piece bearing his color in the crater 23 closest to him and the playing pieces are supported on the turntable.

The object of the game is to accumulate a given number of astronaut playing pieces by saving your astronaut by preventing him from falling through the surface of the moon, while also winning astronaut playing pieces owned by other players, which fall through the moon surface.

A player is selected to spin marble 74 around path 70 at the outside of the moon surface. As the velocity of the marble is reduced due to the incline of the path, it randomly falls into a pocket. If the indicia of the pocket is identified with a particular player's color, that player is expected to quickly remove the space vehicle 27 and its latching tabs 58 from the launching pad whereupon the spring 58 will rapidly bias the turntable in a counterclockwise direction so that openings 38 are aligned with apertures 24. With the turntable in this position, the playing pieces are unsupported and would readily fall through the moon's surface except for the action of the other players who attempt to prevent their playing pieces from falling through the surface by quickly grabbing them. The particular player who removed the space vehicle from its launch pad is allowed to keep all the playing pieces, including his own, which fall through the moon surface. It should be noted that it is unimportant which player spins the marble, but the player whose color the marble lands on removes the space vehicle and the remaining players attempt to save their astronauts from falling through the moon's surface. After each round, each player must position another playing piece in the aperture and a different player takes a turn to spin the marble.

The aspect of rapid situation recognition and player reaction is important to a player's accumulating playing pieces. The more rapidly a player realizes that the marble has landed in a pocket bearing his color, and the faster he removes the space vehicle, the greater his prospect of winning one or more playing pieces from the other players. On the other hand, the

other players must also be quick to recognize that the marble has not landed on their colors, and grab their playing pieces to prevent from losing them through the moon's surface.

To discourage the players from becoming over-zealous and grabbing their astronaut playing pieces before the marble falls into a pocket, the white dots 73 are provided as pocket indicia. If the marble lands on a white dot, it is considered to be a bluff move and any player touching his playing piece loses it to the player spinning the marble. However, if the player spinning the marble touches his astronaut on a bluff move, he merely loses his turn. Should the marble land in a pocket having a star indicia 73, the person spinning the marble is allowed to take a playing piece from a player who is winning the game.

Additional rules may be devised for the game, such as penalizing a player who touches or attempts to remove the space vehicle by mistake and allowing a player who loses all his playing pieces to retrieve a playing piece from a player who has pieces of this particular color. The first player to win ten astronaut playing pieces is considered the winner of the game.

What has been described is a game apparatus having random chance means which require rapid player recognition of a game situation and quick player reaction to the particular situation presented.

It is obvious that upon study by those skilled in the art, that the disclosed invention may be altered or modified without departing from its inventive concept.

We claim:

1. Game apparatus comprising an elevated, generally horizontal playing board defining an aperture therethrough; a platform mounted beneath said playing board for movement relative thereto to a position underlying said aperture; cooperable means on said board and platform for latching the latter in a biased position underlying said aperture; player operated means on said board for releasing said platform from its latched position; a playing piece adapted to be placed in said aperture and supported on the underlying platform when the latter is in its latched position, a chance means for randomly determining when a player is to operate said release means said chance means including a circular path on said board, a ball movable along said path, and a plurality of pockets adjacent said path bearing indicia and adapted to receive a ball from said path.

2. The game apparatus as set forth in claim 1 wherein said platform defines a plurality of spaced-apart openings therethrough arranged so that when said platform is moved to an unbiased position, said openings are in substantial alignment with the board apertures and no support is afforded said playing pieces thereby allowing the pieces to fall through the board.

3. The game apparatus as set forth in claim 2, wherein said platform is pivotally supported from said playing board and wherein said cooperable latch means include a housing integral with said playing surface and defining a number of slots therethrough, fingers secured to said platform and extending to a position adjacent said slots, and a hand-graspable member bearing latching tabs insertable through said slots and engageable with said fingers to maintain the platform in its biased position subject to bodily removal of the hand-graspable member by a player.

4. The game apparatus as set forth in claim 3, wherein the path of said chance means is disposed outwardly of said board; said pockets being closely spaced and circumferentially disposed between the path and the board.

5. The game apparatus as set forth in claim 4, wherein said playing board is three-dimensional and has the appearance of the surface of the moon; said apertures therethrough simulating craters; said hand-graspable member simulating a space vehicle; and said playing pieces simulating astronaut figures, the latter desirably being prevented from falling through said moon surface by being grabbed by each player except the particular player removing the space vehicle.