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Ellis

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[54] BOWLING GAME COUNTER

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[58] **Field of Search**.....235/92 GA, 92 PE, 92 ST; 273/54 C, 54 R; 340/323

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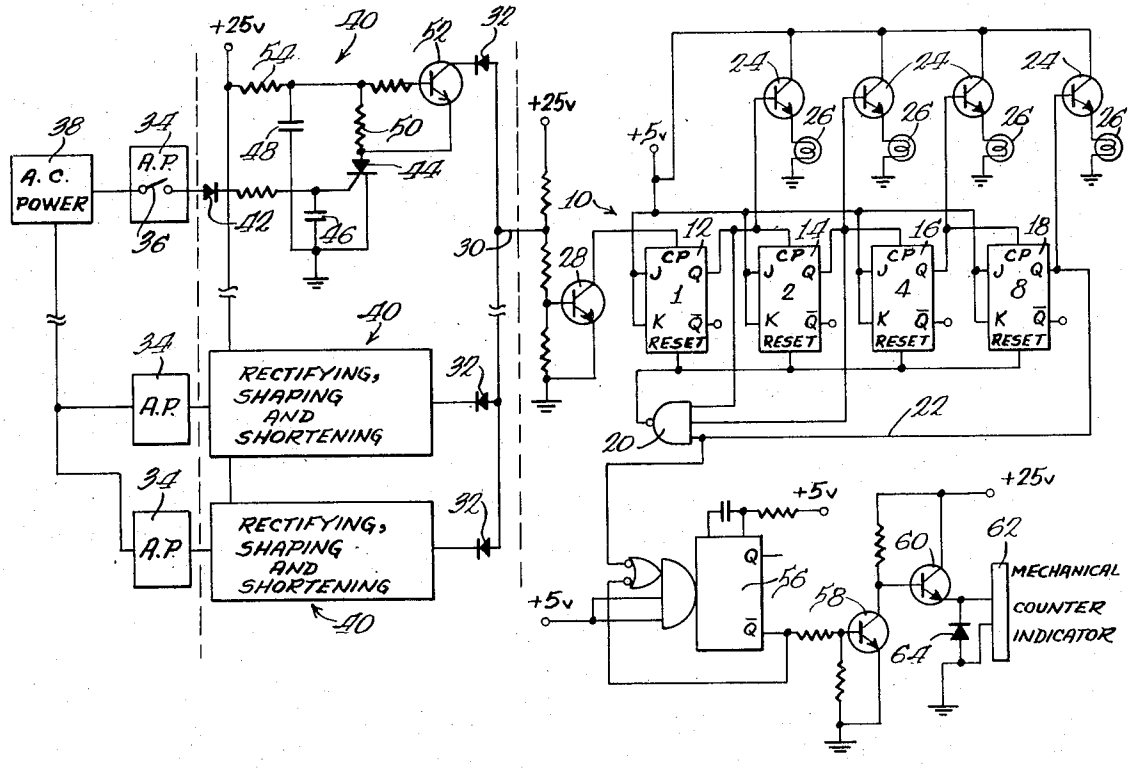
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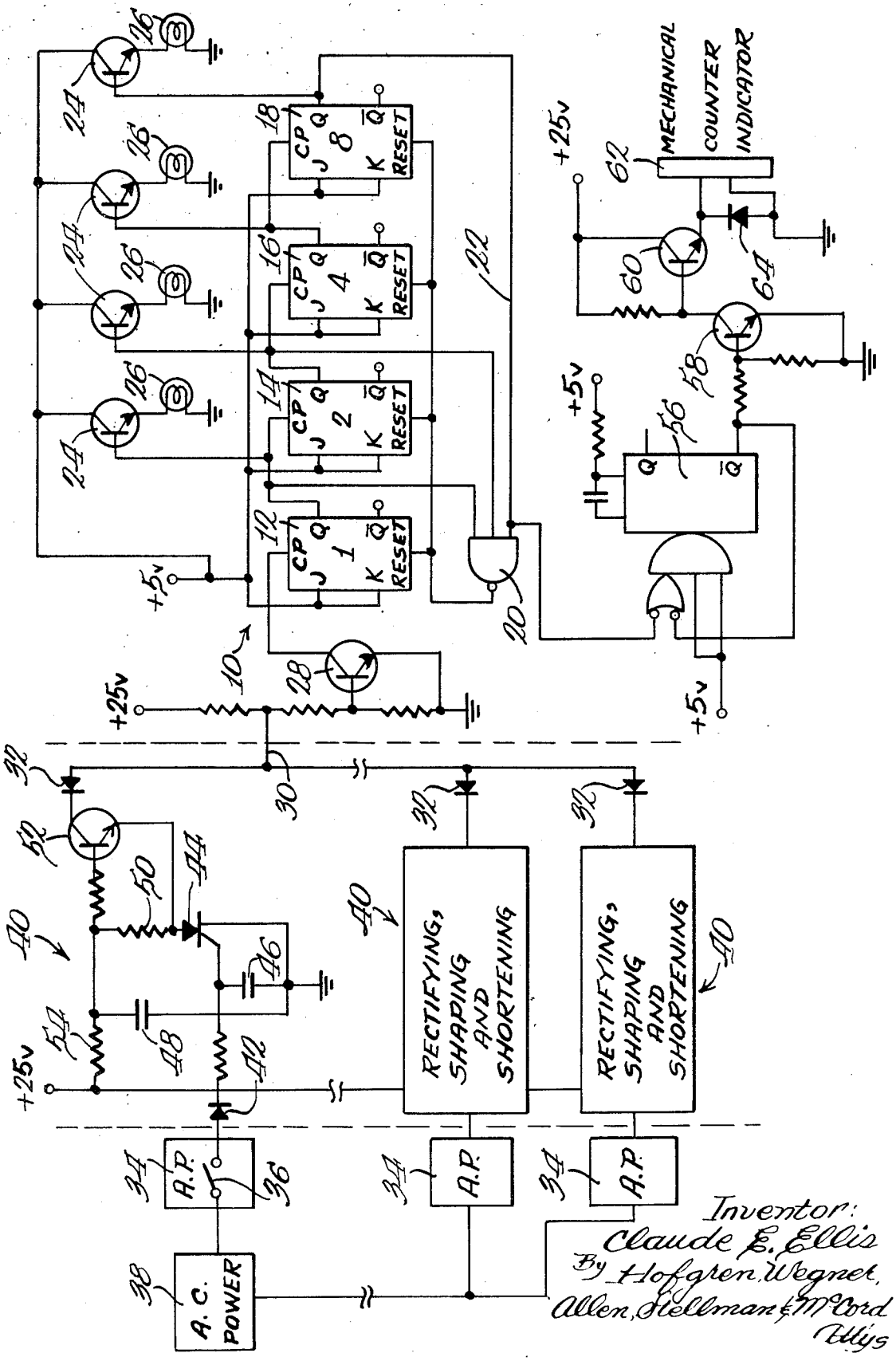
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[57] **ABSTRACT**

An apparatus for counting and indicating the number of bowling games played in a bowling establishment having a plurality of lanes, each equipped with an automatic pinsetter. A count by eleven feedback counter provides a single output signal in response to 11 frame input signals each of which may be taken from the various automatic pinsetters each time a frame is played on any one of the lanes to convert frame signals to game signals. The output signal from the counter is then fed to a totalizer indicator which indicates the number of output pulses received as indicative of the number of games played in the bowling establishment.

1 Claim, 1 Drawing Figure





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BOWLING GAME COUNTER

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Many modern bowling lane establishments are in constant operation, 24 hours of every day. As these establishments usually have a great many bowling lanes, often 50 or more, each generally is equipped with an automatic pinsetter. The pinsetters automatically clear the lanes of bowling pins which have been knocked down after the first ball of each frame and set 10 pins after each frame. It is usually very difficult for the proprietor of a modern bowling lane establishment to determine accurately the actual use his lanes receive. Even if each pinsetter is provided with an individual counter for recording the number of frames or games bowled, a substantial amount of time is required in reading each of the many counters in totaling the sum of all the counters. Obviously, an accurate up to the minute count cannot be made of the actual number of frames played on all the lanes when relying on individual counters at each pinsetter because of the time involved in making the count.

It has therefore been proposed to use a single counter indicator that would indicate the number of games played in the entire establishment. The particular approach taken fed frame signals from each pinsetter to corresponding ten position stepping switches each of which was arranged to generate one output signal each time ten frame signals had been received from an associated pinsetter. The output signals from each of the stepping switches were then fed to a single mechanical counter-indicator which accumulated the number of pulses received from each stepping switch and indicated the number of the same as indicative of the number of games played in the entire establishment based on the assumption that 10 frames on each lane constituted one game.

This approach, while successful, has not been totally satisfactory due to the cost of the equipment. Specifically, the cost of providing a stepping switch for each lane is prohibitive. Furthermore, because the approach is principally an electromechanical one, reliability is not as high as desired.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is the principal object of the invention to provide a new and improved counting and indicating device for use in counting and indicating the number of games played in bowling establishments having a plurality of lanes, each equipped with an automatic pinsetter. More specifically, it is an object of the invention to provide such a counter-indicator that eliminates many of the components heretofore believed necessary and which has improved reliability over the systems heretofore employed for the purpose.

The exemplary embodiment of the invention achieves the foregoing object through a principally electronic structure based about a single, four bit binary feedback, count by eleven counter which is adapted to provide a single game output pulse each time 11 frame pulses are received by the same. The game output pulse is fed to a one shot for shaping purposes and to provide a pulse having sufficient duration to drive a conventional mechanical counter indicator which indicates the number of games played in the establishment. Interposed between the one shot and the mechanical counter indicator is a driving network.

Input frame signals to the feedback counter are provided by a single driver connected to the output of a multiple input OR gate. The number of inputs to the OR gate correspond to the number of lanes in the establishment and each input is connected to a pulse rectifying, shaping and shortening network. The input to each network is connected to a corresponding automatic pinsetter to receive an alternating current frame signal of relatively long duration therefrom.

In operation, the alternating current signal from the automatic pinsetter is converted to a direct current signal of significantly shorter duration so as to effectively preclude frame signals from two or more lanes from reaching the feedback counter simultaneously. On the assumption that an average bowling game consists of 11 frames, the feedback counter will accumulate 11 pulses from one or more of the shaping and shortening networks and issue the aforementioned game output signal each such time eleven frame signals are received.

Other objects and advantages of the invention will become apparent from the following specification taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawing.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

The FIGURE is a schematic view of one form of bowling game counter-indicating apparatus made according to the invention.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

An exemplary embodiment of a bowling game counter-indicator system made according to the invention is seen in the FIGURE and includes a binary counter, generally designated **10**, formed of four bits **12, 14, 16** and **18**. Each of the bits **12–18** is formed of a conventional JK flip-flop and the bits are interconnected as shown with feedback being provided by the output of a NAND gate **20**.

As will be seen, the counter **10** converts frame impulses to game impulses for totalizing and indicating. More specifically, the counter **10** is adapted to issue a game output signal on line **22** whenever it has received a predetermined number of frame input signals which correspond to the number of frames in a game.

In an average bowling game, there are approximately 10.6 frames per game. The fractional frame in excess of 10 is due to the rolling of one or more bonus balls following a mark in the 10 frame according to conventional rules of scoring of a bowling game promulgated by the American Bowling Congress. That is, if a bowler achieves a spare in the tenth frame, he is entitled to roll one bonus ball which, if a strike, will be an additional frame. In such a case, the bowler will have actually bowled 11 frames. If the bowler does not achieve a strike on a single bonus ball following a spare, it will still be indicated by a pinsetter to be a frame inasmuch as the pinsetter will have to be manually cycled to spot a new set of pins for the next bowler.

If a bowler were to roll a strike in the tenth frame, he is entitled to roll two bonus balls. If a strike is obtained on the first bonus ball, the bowler will effectively bowl two additional frames whereas if a strike is not obtained on the first ball, the bowler will bowl but a single additional frame. In any event, it is believed apparent from the foregoing how an average bowling game consists of more than 10 frames.

Returning to the counter **10**, the feedback from the NAND gate **20** is arranged so that the counter **10** is a count by eleven counter. That is, each time eleven input pulses are received, a single output pulse will be generated. A count by eleven counter is chosen as the integer 11 most nearly approximates the average number of frames in a bowling game. However, if desired, a standard binary coded decimal four bit feedback counter could be employed, in which case, it would be assumed that there are ten frames to an average bowling game.

Each of the bits **12–18** includes an output lead to a corresponding driving transistor **24** which is operative to drive an associated lamp **26** when the corresponding bit in the counter **10** is set. The lamps **26** provide means for monitoring both the state and the performance of the counter.

Input frame signals to the counter **10** are received from a driver **28** which is connected to apply a pulse to the first bit **12** of the counter **10** whenever a pulse appears on a line **30**. The line **30** is the output of an OR gate formed by a plurality of diodes **32**, one for each lane, connected in parallel, for purposes to be seen.

As mentioned previously, each time a frame is completed on a lane, a signal is generated by an automatic pinsetter operative on the lane. Conventional automatic pinsetters are indicated in block form at **34** and each includes a switch **36** connected to a source of low voltage alternating current power **38**. The switch **36** will be closed each time the pinsetter **34**, in its normal operation, determines that a frame has been played on that lane. The switch **36** may be of the type described in U.S. Pat. No. 2,949,300 to Huck et al. and specifically, the switch referred to therein as element **619**.

Each time a frame is played and the automatic pinsetter **34** determines the same, the switch **36** is momentarily closed (mechanically speaking) to issue the frame signal. Electronically speaking, the signal issued is of relatively long duration, normally having a duration of about 3 seconds.

Since the counter **10** must be operated on direct current, and since in a large bowling establishment, there is a possibility that two or more of the pinsetters **34** will issue a frame signal substantially simultaneously, in order to provide an accurate indication and avoid coincidence of frame pulses applied to the driver **28**, a pulse rectifying, shaping and shortening circuit, generally designated **40**, is interposed between each diode **32** and the corresponding switch **36** in the corresponding automatic pinsetter **34**.

In particular, there is provided a diode **42** which serves as a half wave rectifier and which applies the positive half of the alternating current signal received from the automatic pinsetter **34** to the gate of a silicon controlled rectifier **44**. Interposed between the diode **42** and the gate of the silicon controlled rectifier **44** is a capacitor **46** which serves to shunt noise signals to ground so as to preclude the silicon controlled rectifier **44** from being triggered by stray noise in the automatic pinsetter electrical circuits.

When the silicon controlled rectifier **44** is triggered by a frame signal from the automatic pinsetter **34**, it begins to conduct and discharges a capacitor **48**. Initially, the total voltage on the capacitor **48** will be applied across a resistor **50** and drives a transistor **52** having its collector connected to a diode **32** into saturation to ultimately provide a pulse to the counter **10**. Of course, as the capacitor **48** discharges, ultimately the transistor **52** will turn off. Generally, it is desirable to select the capacitor **48** and resistor **50** to drive the transistor **52** for approximately 100 microseconds.

The circuit also includes a resistor **54** through which the capacitor **48** may be recharged. After the automatic pinsetter **34** has caused the switch **36** to open thereby eliminating any signal at the gate of the silicon controlled rectifier **44**, the capacitor **48** will begin to charge through the resistor **54**. Because the resistor **54** is also in circuit with the silicon controlled rectifier **44**, its resistance is chosen to be extremely large so that the charging current is less than the minimum current required to keep the silicon controlled rectifier in its conducting state.

Typical values for the resistors **50** and **54** may be 130 ohms and 20 megohms respectively. The capacitor **48** may have a capacitance of 0.1 microfarads.

Each time a transistor **52** is driven into saturation, the transistor **28** is cut off to apply a positive pulse to the input of the counter **10**. As mentioned previously, after eleven pulses are received, a game output signal will be issued on the line **22**. This signal will, in conjunction with the NAND gate **20**, reset the counter for subsequent pulses. In addition, the signal is fed to a one-shot **56** to momentarily drive the same into its unstable state. When the one-shot **56** is tripped, a transistor **58**, which serves as an amplifier is turned off and in turn, turns on a transistor **60**, provided for impedance matching purposes, which is connected to an electromechanical counter-indicator **62**. The conduction of the transistor **60** will therefore provide a driving pulse to the mechanical counter-indicator **62**. When the one-shot **56** returns to its stable state, transistor **58** turns on and **60** will return to a nonconducting state.

The period of the one-shot **56** is generally selected to have a proper width sufficient to drive the mechanical counter-indicator **62**. Normally, a period of about 60 milliseconds will be sufficient.

Also provided between the lines to the mechanical counter-indicator **62** is a shunting diode **64** to protect the circuit from the large electromotive force produced when the magnetic field in the counter collapses.

From the foregoing, it will be appreciated that the invention provides a new and improved bowling game counter indicator and is significantly improved over those heretofore employed for the purpose. In particular, one single counter such as the counter **10** may service an entire establishment in contrast to the multitude of stepping switches previously employed. Furthermore, with the exception of the automatic pinsetter switch **36** and the mechanical counter indicator **62**, the same is entirely electronic in nature and therefore considerably more reliable than prior art systems.

I claim:

1. An apparatus for counting and indicating the number of bowling games played in a bowling establishment having a plurality of lanes each including an automatic pinsetter having means for generating an alternating current frame signal each time a frame in a bowling game is played on the corresponding lane, said counting and indicating apparatus comprising:

a. a plurality of rectifiers, one for each pinsetter, and adapted to receive the alternating current frame

signal therefrom and convert the same to a direct current signal;

b. a plurality of pulse shortening and shaping circuits, one for each lane and connected to receive the direct current signal from the rectifier and shape the same and convert the same to a signal of relatively short duration;

c. an OR gate having its inputs connected to each of said pulse shortening and shaping circuits and adapted to issue an output signal whenever a signal is received on any one of its inputs;

d. a four bit, binary feedback counter connected to receive the output signals from said OR gate and for issuing a single game output signal after a predetermined number of signals have been received from said OR gate;

e. a one-shot connected to said counter to receive said game output signal, said one shot, in response to the receipt of said output game signal providing an output signal of sufficient duration to drive a mechanical counter-indicator;

f. a driver connected to the output of said one-shot; and

g. a mechanical counter-indicator connected to said driver for counting and indicating the number of said game output signals as indicative of the number of games played in the bowling establishment.

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