United States Patent

Smolinski

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[45] **Dec. 12, 1972**

[54] **ILLUMINATED SERVING TRAY**

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[52] **U.S. Cl.** **240/6.4**

[51] **Int. Cl.** **F21v 33/00,** A47g 23/06

[58] **Field of Search** ..... 240/6.4 R, 6.4 G; 108/23

[56] **References Cited**

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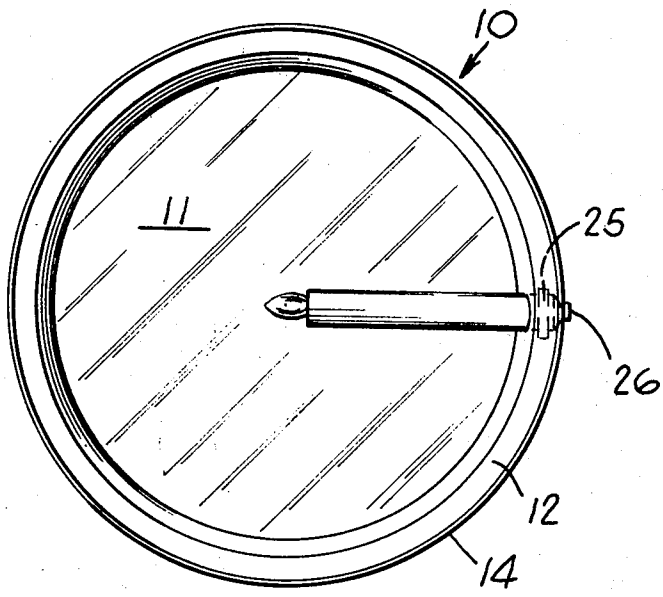
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[57] **ABSTRACT**

An illuminated serving tray with a depth sufficient to removably receive and hold a conventional penlight flashlight, with a translucent pane thereover preferably presenting a nonskid textured upper surface.

6 Claims, 5 Drawing Figures



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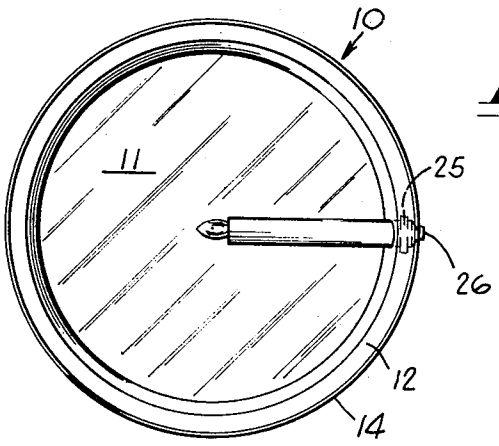


Fig - 1

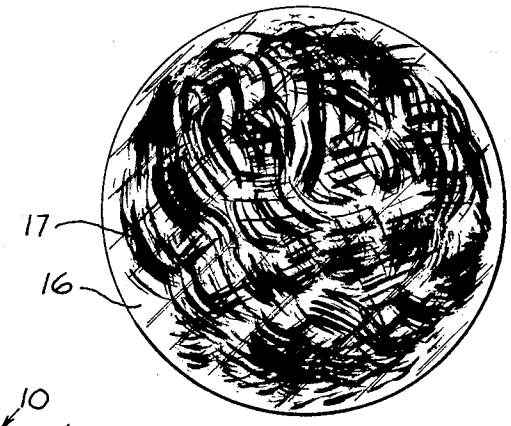
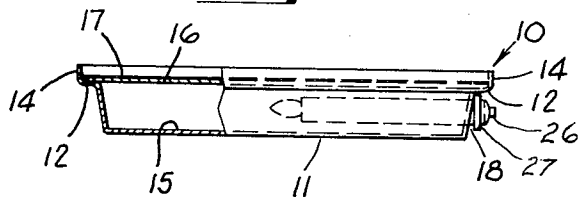


Fig - 3

Fig - 2



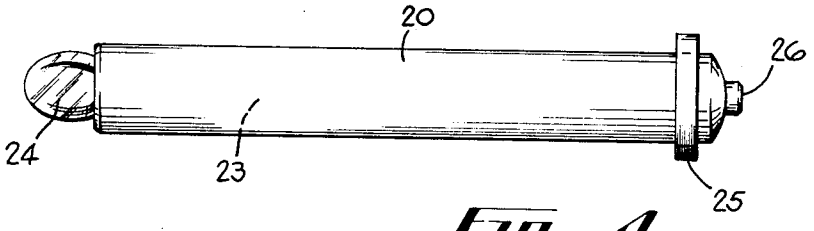


Fig - 4

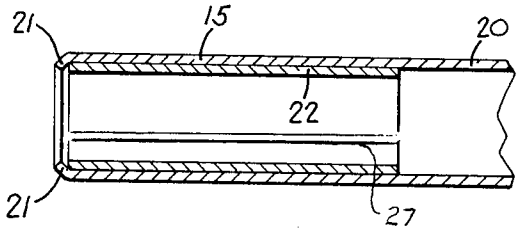


Fig - 5

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ILLUMINATED SERVING TRAY

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

There are many illuminated trays and goblets in this art but all are bulky, expensive and for the most part completely impractical for every day use. It is well known that illumination of trays has been attempted for decorative surfaces or for visual aid in a darkened area, such as the sickroom. The limited purposes have stultified development. Heating with light in connection with removable containers is also known in this art, but has been ineffectual.

None of the prior art devices will satisfy the requirements of the present device. From a practical point of view it is a purpose of the present construction to provide a serving tray which is light in weight and which is completely illuminated over its entire surface by a self-contained illuminating source. It is also amongst the objectives to supply a light source which is easily and quickly removable as an illuminating unit, from the outside of the tray, for spot identifying uses separate from the tray. It is a further objective to provide a translucent tray surface which will disburse the light from the light source and illuminate the entire tray surface as well as transmit some light from the source to the material served on the tray especially liquids. It was unexpectedly discovered that by providing a nonskid textured surface to the translucent tray that this enhanced the disbursal of light from the light source for better and more even illumination of the entire tray surface. It is further an object to provide the interior of the tray between the bottom and the translucent pane with a reflective interior surface for even better illumination.

From a decorative point of view an illuminated tray in a darkened area of the cocktail bar the light of the tray is transmitted not only to the glassware in which the drinks are being served, but also to the various drinks themselves which readily pick up the light in a most beautiful and exciting manner. The aesthetic appeal cannot be discounted because the light picked up by the drinks being served makes for a joyful appearance and lends a gaiety to the entire atmosphere.

Further objects are to provide a construction of maximum simplicity, economy and ease of assembly and disassembly, also such further objects, advantages and capabilities as will fully appear and as are inherently possessed by the device and invention described herein.

The invention further resides in the combination, construction and arrangement of parts illustrated in the accompanying drawing, and while there is shown therein a preferred embodiment thereof, it is to be understood that the same is illustrative of the invention and that the invention is capable of modification and change and comprehends other details of construction without departing from the spirit thereof or the scope of the appended claims.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

FIG. 1 is a top plan view of a circular tray with the translucent pane removed;

FIG. 2 is a side elevational view, partly in section, showing the construction of a circular tray;

FIG. 3 is a top plan view of the removable translucent pane showing the random covering of nonskid material;

FIG. 4 is an enlarged detail in elevation of the mounting for the pen flashlight; and

FIG. 5 is an enlarged detail showing one manner of removability securing a pen flashlight within the mounting.

Referring now to the drawings in which like numerals indicate like parts in the several views, reference being made particularly to FIGS. 1 and 2, the serving tray of this construction is generally designated **10**. It is a shallow dish-like structure with the bottom **11** rising at the perimeter to a narrow shelf **12** and terminating in an upstanding rim **14** of the largest diameter. The dish-like tray can be made of any suitable material such as plastic, aluminum or wood and is coated on the interior with a reflecting substance **15**. The coating may be eliminated if a metal such as aluminum is used which can be finished or polished to a suitable reflective surface. Although this tray is shown as being round, it is apparent that it may be formed in other shapes as desired, such as square, rectangular and so on.

The shoulder or shelf **12** supports a transparent or translucent disc **16** which fits within the upstanding rim **14** with a friction fit, but which is easily removed for cleaning, replacement or assembly. The upper surface of the disc **16** is preferably coated with a semi-tacky substance **17**, such as rubber cement, in random fashion not only to give the surface a nonskid texture but to render a transparent disc **16** somewhat translucent or make a translucent disc **16** more opaque. Unexpectedly the nonskid coating **17** provides a very large disbursal of light because of the many surfaces presented by the random and uneven coating **17**.

An opening **18** is made through the side wall of the tray **10**. This opening is of the same diameter as the internal diameter of a tubular member **20** which is fixed in place in registry with the opening **18** by any suitable means in the bottom **11** of the tray **10**. Preferably the tube **20** provided with the same reflective surface as **15**. The tube **20** is affixed so as to extend from the aperture **18** radially inward toward the center of the tray **10**. The space between the reflective surface **15** and the underside of the disc **16** need only be sufficient to accommodate the outer diameter of tube **20**. Adjacent the inner end **21** and internally of the tube **20** is a thin split cylindrical liner **22** which is retained in place by turning over the ends **21** slightly so that the liner **22** cannot be pushed inward. The split **27** of the inner tube **22** is longitudinal. The tube **20** and the liner **22** are of sufficient diameter to hold and retain with friction fit, a standard conventional pen light flashlight holding two or more pen light batteries axially. The standard flashlight **23** has a bulb **24**. The lamp end is altered so that the bulb **24** is exposed to give the maximum light. This whole conventional unit is slid through an opening **18** into the tube **20** exposing the bulb **24** on the inside and is held in this position by the split tube **22** in firm but removable friction fit. A ring **25** is attached to the outer end of the flashlight and acts as a stop when the flashlight **23** is in its proper position within the bottom of the tray. The flashlight assembly is provided with an "on" and "off" push button switch **26**, which is manually operated.

It will be observed that the transparent or translucent disc **16** may be provided with advertising or any other suitable decoration or design and is readily replaced or substituted.

OPERATION

When the illuminated service tray is assembled with the flashlight **23** in position as shown in FIG. **1**, and the translucent disc **16** with its nonskid coating **17** is in place, the push button switch **26** is operated to the "on" position which ignites the light **24**. This of necessity is a very small lamp but the nature of the reflective surface **15** disburses this light in a multitude of directions over the entire area of the tray. The disbursal of light is distributed by the reflective surfaces but is further enhanced by the unexpected light disbursal generated by the nonskid surface **17** and the random presentation of this material. When drinks are served on this tray in a dimly lighted cocktail lounge, bar or resturant such as ruby port, brandy, creme de menthe, whiskey and the like, the light from the surface of the tray is picked up by the glass or stemware to the drinks themselves which illuminate brilliantly. In a darkened cocktail lounge or bar this not only provides the practical illumination to identify the drink which has been ordered, but it presents the order in a beautiful and cheerful manner.

In case of battery failure or bulb failure, all that is necessary is to grasp the stop **25** and pull the whole conventional assembly **23** out and replace it with another. The batteries and bulb may be tested and changed at a subsequent time so there is no interruption of this kind of service during the busy periods.

It is believed that the new and unusual features of this combination as described herein assures the benefits and objectives stated herein. Many more benefits will be apparent in the use of the illuminated serving tray. One of these is the ability to read the amount of the bar check in some dimly lighted lounges, or the checking of identification cards of minors. The waitress merely pulls the lighting unit from her tray and uses the light for illuminating the problem at hand.

I Claim:

1. In an illuminated serving tray, a suitable shaped receptacle having a shouldered perimeter and sufficient depth between the shoulder and the bottom thereof to position a light unit mounting and an opening in the side wall, a light unit mounting secured within the receptacle in registry with the said opening, an elongated self-contained light unit having an "on-off" switch at one end and a light source at the other end and being removably secured through said opening and within said mounting exposing the light source within said container and with the said switch operable from outside the receptacle, and a translucent tray pane removably retained within said container and supported by said shoulder.

2. The tray of claim **1** wherein the translucent tray pane is provided with a translucent nonskid outer surface.

3. The tray of claim **1** wherein the translucent tray pane is provided with an external translucent random nonskid texture.

4. The tray of claim **1** wherein the light unit is removable for independent operation and replaceable at will.

5. The tray of claim **1** wherein the light unit is retained within the mounting means so that the bulb of the light source projects internally of the receptacle for illumination thereof.

6. The tray of claim **1** wherein the receptacle has an internal reflective surface.

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