

Here's How To Get A Do-It-Yourself Patent

"Once you get your own patent, it's addictive. You want to do it again," says veteran farm writer-turned-inventor C.F. Marley whose stories about innovative farm equipment have appeared in all major U.S. farm magazines, including FARM SHOW. Now Marley is making a name for himself as the inventor of three innovative new products that he patented himself without the aid of a patent attorney.

"I first got the idea in 1983 when FARM SHOW published an article (Vol. 7, No. 6) about a man who had successfully obtained 18 do-it-yourself patents, doing everything himself without the aid of an attorney or agent. That got me started and I received a patent on my first product - a chimney sweep you can control from the ground - in 1986 (featured in FARM SHOW's Vol. 10, No. 1). Recently I received two more patents on my Easy Hitch and the Nibleteer (see accompanying story). If I hadn't been able to do my own patents, I probably wouldn't have gone ahead with these ideas because of the uncertainty and expense. If you do it yourself, you can keep a handle on the cost," says Marley.

Marley made a surprising discovery on the way to patenting his own ideas. "The Patent Office is extremely cooperative in assisting the inexperienced do-it-yourselfer and, in fact, are required by law to help "pro se" (legal talk for "do-it-yourself") patent applicants if the applicant can convince the examiner that he has a patentable invention. They're very willing to help get your application into proper final form once you make an initial application. I've worked with several different examiners now and I continue to be pleased with the way Patent Office personnel will work with you. And if you get into trouble you can always consult with an attorney or patent agent."

The first step in obtaining a patent is to do a search of patent records to see what other patents exist in the general category of your invention. Get a copy of the booklet, "General Information Concerning Patents". (Patent and Trademark Office, Washington, D.C. 20231) It gives basic patent information and also tells you the location of the nearest Patent Depository Library. Patent libraries contain all patents ever granted. Trained specialists will take the time to get you started on your search.

"A good first step is to get a computer readout of the 10 most recent patents in your category. Then look up the actual patents and print out copies of the ones most similar to your invention. Doing the search step yourself saves you several hundred dollars over the cost of having someone do it for you. The only cost is for the copies.

"Having copies of patents similar to your own invention helps write your patent. You can use the wording in existing patents as a guide and change the parts that don't apply. Once you write up your patent, you're ready to contact the patent office.

"One thing that surprised me in dealing with the patent office is how much of patent negotiation is handled by telephone. Your examiner will call you to discuss certain matters which are unclear and will make suggestions on acceptable terminology. When agreement is reached, your examiner will send a communication to confirm what was agreed to on the phone.

"Drawings are an important part of your application but you do not have to supply finished drawings when you submit your application. Reasonable sketches will do. Once again, the patents you turned up in your search will come in handy because you can get an idea what others have done before you. Once your application is approved, you will have time to get final drawings done and delivered.

"One of the most confusing things about the patent process, is knowing what records to keep to document an invention. The most recommended procedure is to keep a bound notebook (not a spiral or looseleaf) and to start in front and use every page to describe, sketch, date and have witnessed by a knowledgeable non-relative each update on the invention as it is made.

"Another way of establishing the date of invention is through a relatively new service of the Patent Office called the Disclosure Documents Program. To use it, you sketch out or photograph your invention and describe it and send it to the Patent Office for filing. Cost is \$6 and the materials will be kept on file for two years.

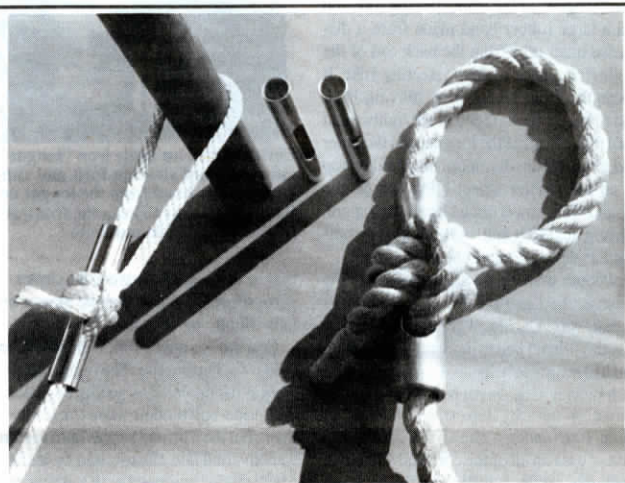
"The best guide I've found for doing my own patents is the book "Patent It Yourself" by David Pressman (Nolo Press, 950 Parker St., Berkeley, Calif. 94710, ph 800 992-6656 - \$29.95). It takes you through every

step of the process and contains all the official Patent Office forms needed to make a patent application. It's an excellent book that'll tell you everything you need to know and get you familiar with the language examiners use.

"Even if you do it yourself, patent fees will add up to \$700 or so. But if you work with an attorney it can run \$3,000 to \$10,000, or even more, depending on the difficulty of the patent. The best part is that if you do it yourself you'll end up with a better patent because you know your invention better than anyone else. "Doing my own patents is a lot of work but I find it fascinating and rewarding. And even if an idea doesn't pan out, it's a lot of fun trying and I don't have as much tied up in it.

"One thing you might want to do before getting started is to have a confidential evaluation made of your invention before applying for a patent. If you do, it's important to make sure you're dealing with a reputable organization. One of the best programs of this kind is operated by the University of Wisconsin. For a \$150 fee, they'll do a market research study on the invention within 60 days and give you a report on the results. (Innovations Center, University of Wisconsin, 402 McCutchan, Whitewater, Wis. 53190 (ph 414 472-1365)."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, C.F. Marley, P.O. Box 93, Nokomis, Ill. 62075 (ph 217 563-2588).



Marley's "Just-Patented" New Inventions

C.F. Marley obtained "do-it-yourself" patents for two new inventions within the past few months - the "Easy Hitch" device for tying rope and the "Nibleteer" corn cutter for cutting kernels off the cob.

Marley did all the patent work on both inventions himself and he's already found a manufacturer for the Easy Hitch, which was co-invented by R.F. Spinner. He hopes to have a manufacturer lined up for the Nibleteer soon so it'll be on the market for the upcoming season.

The Easy Hitch combines an aluminum slotted-tube tying device with a new method of tying that eliminates tightly tied knots that are difficult or impossible to untie. The rope is first threaded through the tube, then around the load or post. To form the hitch, a small loop is pushed out the slot on one side of the tube using a hole on the opposite side of the tube. Then the end of the rope is wound once or twice around the tube while being tucked under the loop. When tension is applied to the rope it tightens down and holds firmly but never gets so tight it won't easily untie. It also remains tied when the rope is slack.

Easy Hitches are available for all sizes of rope. A set of two for 3/8-in. rope sells for \$4.95 (plus \$1.50 postage).

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Loopex Company, 233 W. Edwards, Litchfield, Ill. 62056 (ph 217 324-5977).

The Nibleteer strips kernels from cobs with two half-round vertical blades mounted atop legs that flex in and out.



The blades are held against the cob as the ear is pushed down through them. Guards above each knife protects hands. The ear is pushed all the way down and then pulled back up, given a quarter turn, and pushed down again.

Marley's prototype Nibleteers are made out of stainless steel.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, C.F. Marley, Box 93, Nokomis, Ill. 62075 (ph 217 563-2588).

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