

Just For Openers January-December 2025 1

Pop The Top And Kick Back With Ernest Cullen By Don Thornton

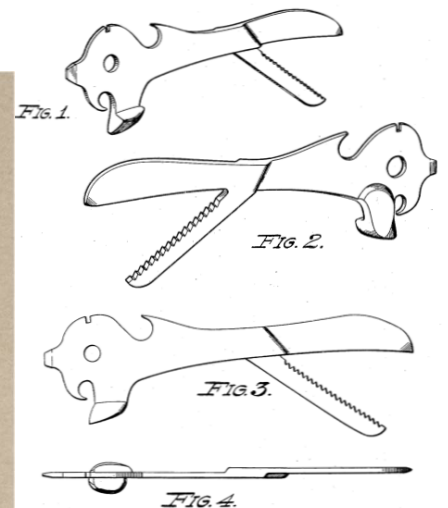
It's a toss up. For some collectors, the most famous product made by the Barcalo Manufacturing Company of Buffalo is an iron "combination kitchen tool." For those who like to sit back and drink beer, it's the Barcalounger reclining chair.

The culinary tool came first. Ernest Cullen of San Diego, California, was granted Design Patent No. 111,564 on October 4, 1938 for a multi-purpose tool that could be used as, among other things, a bottle, can and jar opener, a hammer, screwdriver and wrench. He followed it with a utility patent, No. 2,230,376 on February 4, 1941.

How a San Diego inventor and a Buffalo manufacturer teamed up is not known, but it resulted in a flat, 6 1/2-inch long device marked **BARCALO-BUFFALO U.S.A. PAT - D-111,564**.

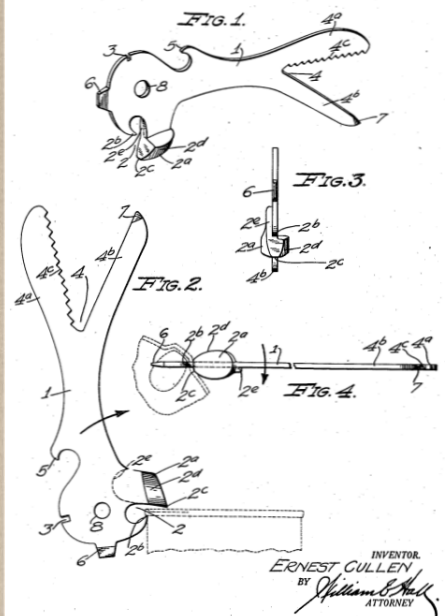


Oct. 4, 1938. E. CULLEN Des. 111,564
COMBINATION KITCHEN TOOL
Filed May 20, 1938



INVENTOR
ERNEST CULLEN
BY *William E. Hall*
ATTORNEY

Feb. 4, 1941. E. CULLEN 2,230,376
HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCE
Filed June 22, 1938



INVENTOR
ERNEST CULLEN
BY *William E. Hall*
ATTORNEY

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Pop The Top And Kick Back

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The reclining chair, the first version of which was called the Barcaloaf, was introduced in the late 1940s. By the 1950s, it was America's favorite kick back chair. And it should be noted that early ads for the Barcalounger usually featured men in ties relaxing -- without a beer.

The Barcalo Manufacturing Company, launched in 1896 by Edward Joel Barcalo, was much more than a kitchen tool and a recliner. It's a story worth telling.

The company first offered metal bed frames, metal cribs, bedsprings, bedstead rails and similar products. It proved very successful over the years. In 1914 Barcalo branched out, acquiring the Charles E. Hall Company of Buffalo, manufacturers of adjustable wrenches, pliers and other iron-forged tools.

Tools slowly became the focus of the Barcalo company, as it added to the line over the next 20 years, although it still manufactured mattresses, hammocks and adjustable pillows. All that changed when Edward Barcalo licensed patents by Anton Lorenz and began manufacturing a "reclining" chair.

The fame of the Barcalounger quickly eclipsed the tool operation. By the early 1950s, the Barcalo workforce grew to 550 to meet the exploding demand for the recliner. At the time there were other recliners on the market, notably La-Z-Boy, but the Barcalounger, with its built-in footrest, proved most popular.

But by the end of the decade the future of Barcalo Manufacturing was in doubt. Edward Barcalo, once the moving force of the company, had been relegated to "honorary" chairman of the board. He died in 1963 at the age of 93, the same year the tool division was sold to the Crescent Tool Company, with the Barcalo line, very collectible today, disappearing over the

Dec. 30, 1947.

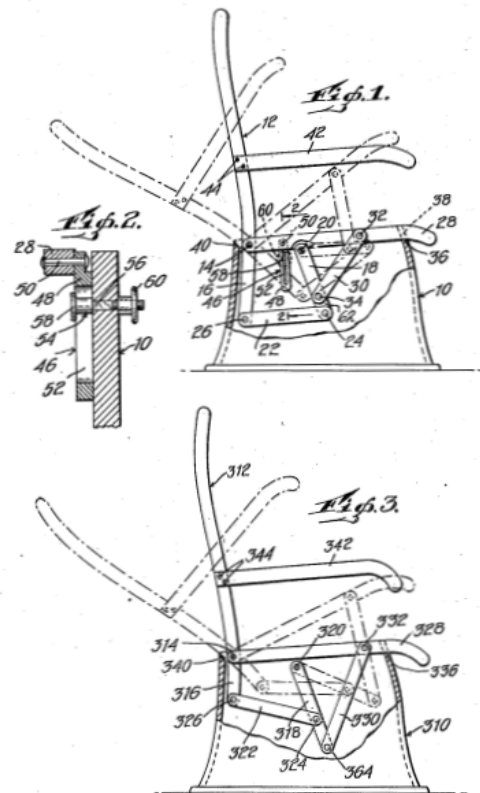
A. LORENZ

2,433,521

RECLINING ARTICLE OF FURNITURE

Filed March 1, 1945

2 Sheets-Sheet 1

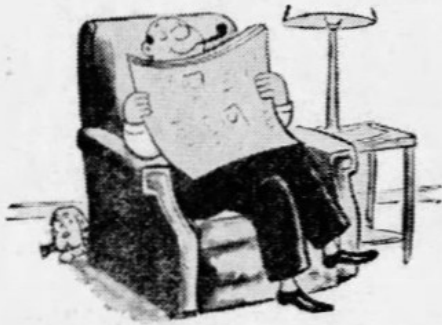


INVENTOR
ANTON LORENZ
BY [Signature]
ATTORNEY

Pop The Top And Kick Back

With Ernest Cullen By Don Thornton

Found: a chair that makes you RELAX!



At first glance a Barcalounger is like any other fine chair. Made by master craftsmen to highest quality standards, it is superbly finished in beautiful decorator fabrics, plastics and leather.



But sit down and lean back . . . and what a surprise! Patented "Floating Comfort" cradles you in any position from sitting to full reclining. The Barcalounger is actually more relaxing than a bed!



The Barcalounger eases the strain on the heart, relieves nervous tension. No knobs or levers to operate — its action is automatic! Ask for a Barcalounger demonstration today!

next few years.

The rest of the company, including the Barcalounger line, was sold in 1965 and moved to North Carolina. After decades of success, a flood forced that company into bankruptcy in 2010 and for a short time the Barcalounger was not made. However, it was revived in 2011 by the private equity firm Hancock Park Associates with the Barcalounger line returning to the market.

