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Norton Sarnoff's 1987 Multi-Purpose Can Opener

by Don Thornton

For most of his life, Norton Robert Sarnoff was wrapped up in a super successful, privately held aluminum foil dynasty dating back to 1950. He joined his father's Illinois firm, the E-Z Por Corporation with its E-Z Foil line of aluminum products in the early 1960s and helped build it up before it was sold in 1979.

The firm, founded in 1950 by Ben Sarnoff, was purchased by American Home Products Corporation, which ended up taking court action against Norton Sarnoff for allegedly violating a "no-competition" contract. The action was triggered by Sarnoff launching in 1980 the Ensar Corporation, which offered a line of housewares.

The court ruled in favor of Sarnoff, who went on in 1984 to launch the Handi-Foil Corporation in Wheeling, Illinois, which a trade group once credited with developing "new items and concepts to revolutionize the foil industry." Sarnoff was very much a part of that "revolution," being awarded more than 80 patents from 1983 to 2014 nearly all related to aluminum kitchen baking items.

These included disposable roasting pans of all sizes, circular and oblong pans, pans with handles, nesting pans, grill liners, pizza pans, cookie sheets, disposable lids – and one handheld church key combination.

He was granted Design Patent No. 288,895 on March 24, 1987 for his "multi-purpose can opener," a combination can puncher, bottle opener and tab-top popper. The 4 ¼-inch chrome opener is marked: **ENSAR CORP. PAT. PEND. WHEELING, IL. 60090.**

The opener had limited production. After all, by 1965 pop tops had taken over and plastic beverage bottles with screw off caps assumed control in the early 1980s – but Sarnoff's opener is still sleek, attractive and effective.



<p>United States Patent [19] Sarnoff et al.</p> <p>[54] MULTI-PURPOSE CAN OPENER</p> <p>[75] Inventors: Norton Sarnoff, Northbrook; Carl R. Fletcher, Arlington Heights, both of Ill.</p> <p>[73] Assignee: Ensar Corporation, Wheeling, Ill.</p> <p>[**] Term: 14 Years</p> <p>[21] Appl. No.: 650,193</p> <p>[22] Filed: Sep. 13, 1984</p> <p>[52] U.S. Cl. D8/18</p> <p>[58] Field of Search D8/18, 33, 34, 40, 43; 30/400, 443, 446, 412; 7/151, 152, 156</p> <p>[56] References Cited</p> <p>U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS</p> <p>D. 268,250 3/1979 Smyth D9/438</p> <p>1,368,038 2/1921 Larsen 220/274</p> <p>2,195,253 3/1940 Meier et al. 30/446</p>	<p>[11] Patent Number: Des. 288,895</p> <p>[45] Date of Patent: Mar. 24, 1987</p> <p>4,253,352 3/1981 O'Neal 81/3.55</p> <p>4,309,921 1/1982 Miller 81/3.57</p> <p>4,416,171 11/1983 Chmela et al. 81/3.55</p> <p><i>Primary Examiner</i>—Bernard Ansher <i>Assistant Examiner</i>—Terry Pfeffer <i>Attorney, Agent, or Firm</i>—Lee, Smith & Zickert</p> <p>[57] CLAIM</p> <p>The ornamental design for a multi-purpose can opener, as shown and described.</p> <p>DESCRIPTION</p> <p>FIG. 1 is a perspective view taken from the top, front and right side of a multi-purpose can opener showing our new design.</p> <p>FIG. 2 is a top view thereof.</p> <p>FIG. 3 is a right side elevational view thereof.</p> <p>FIG. 4 is a left side elevational view thereof.</p> <p>FIG. 5 is a front elevational view thereof.</p> <p>FIG. 6 is a rear elevational view thereof.</p>
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U.S. Patent

Mar. 24, 1987

Des. 288,895

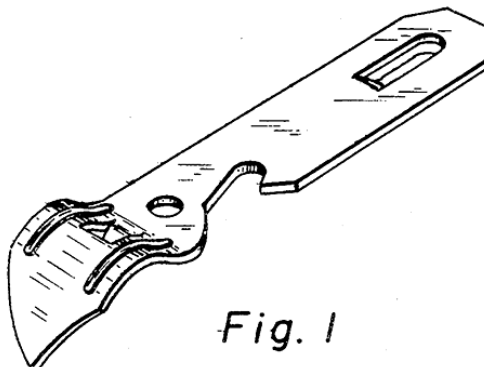


Fig. 1



Fig. 2

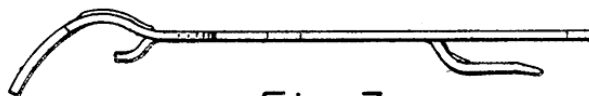


Fig. 3

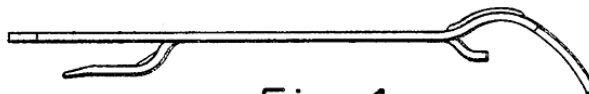


Fig. 4



Fig. 5

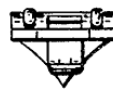


Fig. 6