



## TENNESSEE INVENTORS ASSOCIATION

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HIGHLIGHTS OF APRIL 2004 MEETING

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### CONDENSED VERSION CALL FOR FULL VERSION

**This months meeting featured the interesting presentations of two of our long time members.**

Gordon Campbell, the holder of several patents discussed his own history and how some of his ideas turned into useful products. We heard of his racket ball “picker upper” that utilizes a special strip of adhesive material attached to a racket that helps to hasten the recovery of racket balls and at the same time relieves the player of bending over. Might even speed up the game. A forearm exerciser was shown that might prevent the pain of tennis elbow and strengthen the muscles of the lower arm. He co-invented and patented an apparatus called the “Scent of Life”. It is an alarm for the deaf. Its main attribute is that it emits a special odor (not noxious) when a regular smoke alarm is activated.

While a bit whimsical another of his inventions is the device shown above that should be fun for pet owners. Gordon is shown holding up a *Piñata* for pets. Note the ribbons flowing from the bottom of the base. The idea is to have the pet pull one to release a “treat”. Neat !

One of his greater accomplishments might be the teacher’s aid, a grading device. Campbell told of how the instrument came about and the difficulty encountered with a former colleague. In the end, he tells us, his patent is stronger than one held by the former partner. This should be an interesting situation to follow.

Gordon’s patent (6,574,646) in it’s abstract states that it is “ an electronic computing device for providing plurality of possible test grades on a scale of zero to one-hundred”. Since he is a teacher he recognized the need to ease the burden teachers bear in processing and grading student papers. With a few keystrokes the student’s performance on a test being scored is quickly shown on a highly visible readout.

NO-- IT IS NOT A JUMP ROPE

### ON THE OTHER HAND---A PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED

Being his usual practical self, Martin Skinner tackled the problem of the coiled water hose and the nuisance presented by the need to conveniently store them. They sometimes act like wet noodles and need to be put away for the next use or the user might find a disorganized jumble or,---who knows what.

In combating that headache Martin tried several means of storage or at least investigated some-- especially like those he displayed during his presentation. In the end he invented a system prepared from PVC material in various sections that allowed the user to simply insert one section of tubing through the coiled hose, set it on end allowing it to collapse, drain and become much more manageable.

Not that that was enough Skinner went on to improve on his idea and arranged to make the system in segments enabling it to fit into one eighteen inch by three inch mailing tube. That made shipping handy and provided a storage container when needed.

It is well known that Martin Skinner is a retired patent agent so it was no surprise to learn that in this case he sought some needed protection. The wisdom of a provisional patent application was selected. Again in his

unique fashion he wrote the application as if it were to go through the full utility patent process. The provisional application is now in effect. The idea was to have everything in place should the product prove worthy of the extra expense in obtaining a full-blown patent. Martin is now in the process of considering his next move. The actual manufacturing of the system and ensuing marketing methods of his handy product are under study.

It was not surprising that during the ensuing question and comment period many suggestions were offered. This again demonstrates the power of minds coming together. Among the suggestions, sources came to light that might help in finalizing Martins project.

Still remaining though, was the proposition of how to safely remove the labeling prevailing on the PVC material. Most solvents were eliminated.

### **NEXT MEETING MAY 15 2004**

This display case at the Blount County Library was one of three featuring the works of African American inventors during the recent Black History month. Needless to say, many of the inventors and their inventions are unknown and unheralded. The exhibition was checked out leading to the discovery of our speaker for the May meeting.

We will be privileged to hear from Shirley Carr Crowley who assembled the material that was so well displayed. She will be presenting an overhead slide program to further enlighten our understanding of people and ideas so long buried in obscure history

Shirley Carr Clowney is the Executive Director of the African Americans of Appalachia and Blount County. Ms. Clowney is a noted researcher and speaker in the area and will present a revealing program about African American inventors. It will be of interest to discover how many inventions, some of which are well known, that were actually originated by African Americans.