
Rudolph W. Janda, Immigrant Czech Inventor

by: Kenneth Janda

Through a chance conversation recently at St. Paul's Czech and Slovak Sokol Hall, I discovered that a close Czech-American relative was a prominent inventor who from 1926 to 1940 had filed and obtained eighteen patents. My conversation with fellow Sokol member Robert Jacobson (known as Jake) occurred during lunch at the August 25, 2019 conference to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the 1944 Slovak National Uprising. Knowing that Jake was a patent lawyer, I asked about his work and mentioned that my father had filed at least one patent application. Jake immediately began to search for "John Janda" patents on his iPhone. That search failed, but he turned up numerous patents for a "Rudolph W. Janda." Thank you, Jake, for expanding my knowledge of my family's history.

In 1947, my family moved to a small town in Illinois. In 1953 during my senior year in high school, I visited Uncle Rudolph at his CECO Steel office to discuss my forthcoming major at Illinois State Normal University. He suggested that I study engineering, his field. I recall my father once mentioning that Uncle Rudolph had invented the

agitator used in washing machines. Unfortunately, ISNU did not offer an engineering degree, so I enrolled in Industrial Arts, thinking it was much the same. Undoubtedly, he was aghast at what little I knew of academia. I may have regained some respect for my family eight years later when I joined the political science faculty at Northwestern University.

After discharge from the Army Rudolph Janda returned to Western Electric in Cicero to work for the Conlon Electric Washer Company, which made washing machines for Western Electric. From 1926 to 1933 he successfully filing sixteen patents on behalf of the Conlon Corporation—

five with Carl F. Anderson and eleven on his own. Being "assignors" in the filings meant that they transferred their patent rights to the Conlon Corporation. All sixteen patents dealt either with ironing machines or washing machines. During that time he lived in Cicero.

1. February 8, 1926 filing, Serial No. 86,701. Patented Apr. 30, 1929. 1,711,338



Rudolph Janda. photo courtesy of the author.

Carl F. Anderson, of Brookfield, and Rudolph W. Janda, of Cicero, Ill., assigns to Conlon Corporation, of Cicero, Ill.

CLUTCH

Our invention relates to clutches and it incorporates several features in the construction, operation and control.

2. June 14, 1926 filing, Serial No. 115,820
Patented Jan. 17, 1928. 1,656,656

Carl F. Anderson, of Brookfield, and Rudolph W. Janda, of Cicero, Ill., assigns to Conlon Corporation, of Cicero, Ill.

IRONING MACHINE.

Our invention relates in general to ironing mechanism and more particularly to a novel combination table and ironing machine construction.

3. August 30, 1926 filing, Serial No. 132,399.
Patented Feb. 28, 1928, 1,660,448

Rudolph. W. Janda, of Cicero, Ill., assignor to Conlon Corporation, of Cicero, Ill.

CLUTCH

The present invention pertains in general to clutch mechanism, and more particularly to a clutch especially adapted for use in ironing machines of the character disclosed in the patent application of Messrs. Anderson and Janda,

4. September 25, 1926 filing, Serial No 137,748. Patented Nov. 12, 1929 1,735,201

Rudolph. W. Janda, of Cicero, Ill., assignor to Conlon Corporation, of Cicero, Ill.

CLUTCH AND DRIVING MEANS

My invention pertains in general to washing machines and more particularly to improvements in clutch and driving means I have made in a washing machine of the same general character as that disclosed in the copending patent application of Carl F.

Anderson and Rudolph W. Janda, Serial No. 86,701, filing February 8, 1926.

5. November 4, 1926 filing, Serial 146,106.
Patented Jan. 28, 1930 1,745,288

Carl F. Anderson, of Brookfield, and Rudolph W. Janda, of Cicero, Ill., assigns to Conlon Corporation, of Cicero, Ill.

SWITCH

Our present invention has to do with electrical switch mechanism and more particularly to switch locking mechanism designed especially for use in conjunction with our novel ironing machine disclosed in our co-pending patent application, Serial No. 115,820, filing June 14, 1926.

6. November 25, 1927 filing, Serial No. 235,440, Patented Feb. 4, 1930 1,745,490
Rudolph. W. Janda, of Cicero, Ill., assignor to Conlon Corporation, of Cicero, Ill.

CLUTCH-CONTROL MOUNTING

This invention relates to clutch control means, and more particularly to a mounting for such means adapted especially for use in washing machines.

7. December 20, 1927 filing, Serial No. 241,333. Patented Apr. 12, 1932 1,853,395
Carl F. Anderson, of Brookfield, and Rudolph W. Janda, of Cicero, Ill., assigns to Conlon Corporation, of Cicero, Ill.

IRONING MACHINE

Our invention relates in general to ironing mechanism and more particularly to a novel combination table and ironing machine construction.

8. June 25, 1928 filing, Serial No. 288,154.
Patented Nov. 25, 1930 1,782,572
Rudolph. W. Janda, of Cicero, Ill., assignor to Conlon Corporation, of Cicero, Ill.

CLUTCH

This invention relates to clutches, and more particularly to a clutch and a clutch element for use in ironing machines and other machines in which parts are operated by an eccentric or equivalent means, the parts operated exerting a reactive pressure which tends to declutch the members of the clutch.

9. November 4, 1928 filing, Serial No. 148,107.
Patented June 10, 1930 1,762,605

Carl F. Anderson, of Brookfield, and Rudolph W. Janda, of Cicero, Ill., assignors to Conlon Corporation, of Cicero, Ill.

TABLE STRUCTURE

The present invention pertains in general to table structures and more particularly to a combination support and closure for ironing machines.

10. September 26, 1930 filing, Serial No 484,542. Patented July 19, 1932 1,867,839
Rudolph W. Janda, of Cicero, Ill., assignor to Conlon Corporation, of Cicero, Ill.

IRONING MACHINE

This invention relates to ironing machines, and more particularly to machines of this character intended for domestic use.

11. February 10, 1930 filing, Serial No. 427,233.
Patented Aug. 2, 1932 1,869,966

Rudolph W. Janda, of Cicero, Ill., assignor to Conlon Corporation, of Cicero, Ill.

CASTER, MOUNTING

This invention relates to caster mounting means, and more particularly to means for mounting casters upon stove legs and supporting members of like construction.

12. September 21, 1931 filing, Serial No. 563,944. Patented Nov. 13, 1934 1,980,757

Rudolph W. Janda, of Cicero, Ill., assignor to Conlon Corporation, of Cicero, Ill.

CLUTCH

This invention relates to clutches.

13. May 16, 1932 filing, Serial No. 611,473.

Patented Sept. 12, 1933 1,926,100

Rudolph W. Janda, of Cicero, Ill., assignor to Conlon Corporation, of Cicero, Ill.

IRONING MACHINE AND ATTACHMENTS THEREFOR

This invention relates to ironing machines and has to do with means for connecting utility devices to the motor of the ironing machine to be driven thereby.

14. September 15, 1933 filing, Serial No 689,534. Patented Dec. 31, 1935 2,026,345

Rudolph W. Janda, of Cicero, Ill., assignor to Conlon Corporation, of Cicero, Ill.

IRONING MACHINE

This invention relates to ironing machines, and has to do with ironing machines intended for domestic use and which employ a rotating roll and a cooperating shoe movable toward and away from the roll.

15. September 21, 1933 filing, Serial No 690,302. Patented Sept. 15, 1936 2,054,631

Rudolph W. Janda, of Cicero, Ill., assignor to Conlon Corporation, of Cicero, Ill.

IRONING MACHINE

This invention relates to ironing machines, and has to do with an ironing machine intended for domestic use.

16. November 16, 1936 filing, Serial No. 65,918
Patented Feb. 23, 1937 Des. 103,322

Rudolph W. Janda, Berwyn, Ill., assignor to Conlon Corporation, Cicero, Ill.

DESIGN FOR IRONING MACHINE GEAR BEAD

“To all whom it may concern: Be it known that I, Rudolph W. Janda, a citizen of the United States, residing at Berwyn, in the county of Cook and State of Ill., have invented a new, original, and ornamental

Design for Ironing Machine Gear Head, of which the following is a specification, reference being had to the accompanying drawing, forming a part thereof. Figure 1 is a front elevational view of an ironing machine gear head, showing my new design; and Figure 2 is a Side elevational view of the gear head Shown in Figure 1. I claim: The ornamental design for an ironing machine gear head, as shown.”

RUDOLPH. W. JANDA.

The usual wording of this 1936 filing signaled his departure from the Conlon Corporation. He also filed a different type of patent, a *design patent* for the ornamental design of a functional item. One suspects that Rudolph Janda concluded that the Conlon Corporation benefited from his inventions far more than he did.

By 1937, Rudolph Janda was employed at the Chicago location of Fairbanks, Morse & Company. The company began as manufacturer of commercial scales. It diversified into making pumps, engines and other forms of machinery—including washing machines. This, then was the invention that my father had mentioned. His uncle, and my grand uncle, Rudolph W. Janda, had invented the washing machine agitator. Here is his successful filing for a patent of a device that we still easily recognize today and have all used in the past.

17. December 8, 1937 filing, Serial No. 180,515
 Patented May 23, 1939 2,159,271
Rudolph W. Janda, Berwyn, Ill., assignor to Fairbanks, Morse & Co., Chicago, Ill., a corporation of Ill.

WASHING MACHINE AGITATOR

This invention relates to washing machines and more particularly to improvements in agitators used in connection therewith.

Rudolph Janda had a short relationship with Fairbanks, Morse. By 1940 he filed what may have

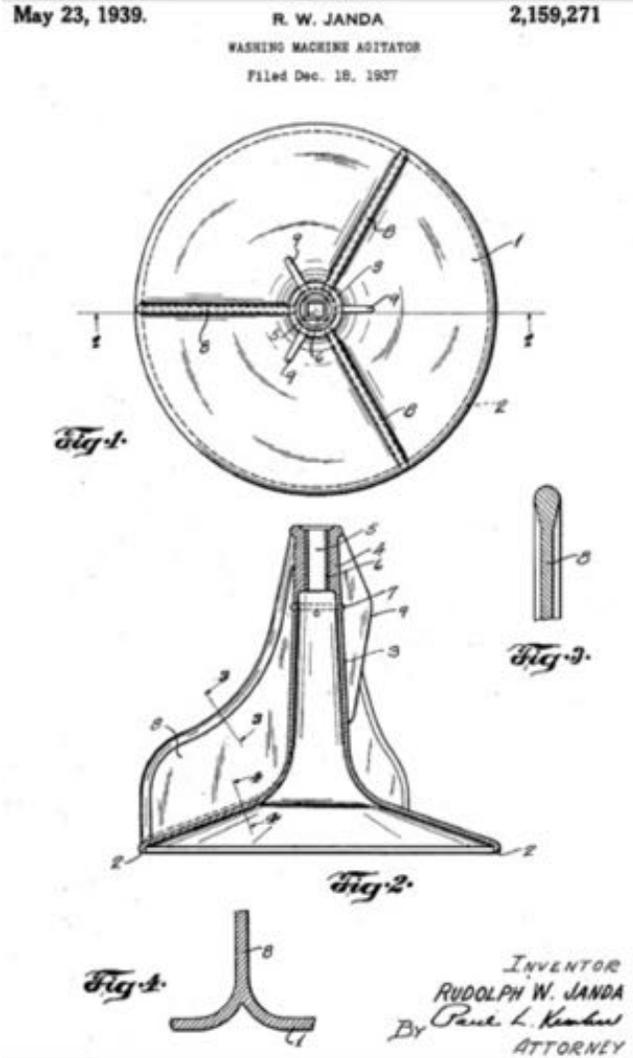


Image for 1937 washing machine agitator patent. photo courtesy of the author.

been his last patent application, this one with CECO Steel.

18. March 28, 1940 filing, Serial No. 326,358.
 Patented Sept. 24, 1940 2,215,658
Joseph P. Arens, Oak Park, and Rudolph W. Janda, Berwyn, Ill., assignors to CECO Steel Products Corporation, Omaha, Nebr., a corporation of Nebraska,

METHOD OF MAKING EXPANDED METAL PRODUCTS

This invention relates to the manufacture of sheet metal products and more specifically to a

reenforced, expanded metal product and a method of making the same.

That 1940 patent appears to have launched Rudolph Janda's ascent into management at CECO Steel. The company is described in this entry of the *Encyclopedia of Chicago*:

In 1946, a decade after its name changed to the Ceco Steel Products Corp., the company moved its headquarters from Omaha to Cicero. By 1950, annual sales were about \$40 million, and 1,500 of the company's 2,800 total employees worked in the Chicago area. In 1961, operating plants in suburban Lemont and Romeoville, as well as Cicero, the company name was shortened to Ceco Corp. In 1980, when annual sales stood at about \$400 million, the headquarters moved from Cicero to Oak Brook Terrace. In 1990, Ceco merged with H. H. Robertson Inc. of Pittsburgh; the new entity, known as the Robertson-Ceco Corp., made its home in California.

CECO, in capitals, became the company's registered trademark in 1947. Rudolph W. Janda became CECO Steel's Chief Engineer and vice-president. He was also a member of Lodge Praha no. 231 I.O.O.F.; Berwyn Post no. 2378 V.F.W.; and the Czechoslovak Engineers Society.

In the mid 1950s, Rudolph and Marie moved a short distance to a one-level home at 361 Kent Road in the even more fashionable suburb, Riverside. He died from cancer at age 70 on February 24, 1963. Several newspapers published long paragraphs for his obituaries. A newspaper search uncovered no obituary for his wife. According to Family Search, wife Marie died on August 19, 1980.

Rudolph and Marie had one child, Rudolph W. Janda, Jr., born in 1920. Rudy earned a medical degree from the University of Chicago in 1944 and was immediately commissioned a Lieutenant in the Army. Fluent in Czech, he reportedly served with



6938 Riverside Dr in 2018. photo courtesy of the author

General Patton when Pilsen was liberated in 1945. Rudy returned as a Captain in 1948 and began medical practice as an oncologist. Later, he was an attending physician to his father.

Sadly, Rudy the oncologist also died from cancer at age 58. He left four children from his marriage to Rosemary (Purvis) Janda. They were Kathryn (Mick) Lundell, Bill (Vicki) Janda, Jim (Shirley) Janda, and Rudolph W. Janda, III.

After I moved to the Twin Cities in 2013 and began to research my Czech heritage, I tried without success to determine whether cousin Rudy's wife, Rosemary, was still alive. Unbeknownst to me, Rosemary Janda was living in Minnesota at the Northfield Retirement Center in nearby Northfield, Minnesota. Eventually, but too late, I learned that she died at the retirement home on December 7, 2011. Fortunately, my wife and I managed to meet in 2014 with her daughter, Kathryn, in Northfield. From what I gathered in our meeting, Kathryn was as unaware of her grandfather's inventions as I was. I was pleased to share this discovery with her. ♦