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(54) **LED LIGHTING SYSTEM FOR PATIO
UMBRELLA**

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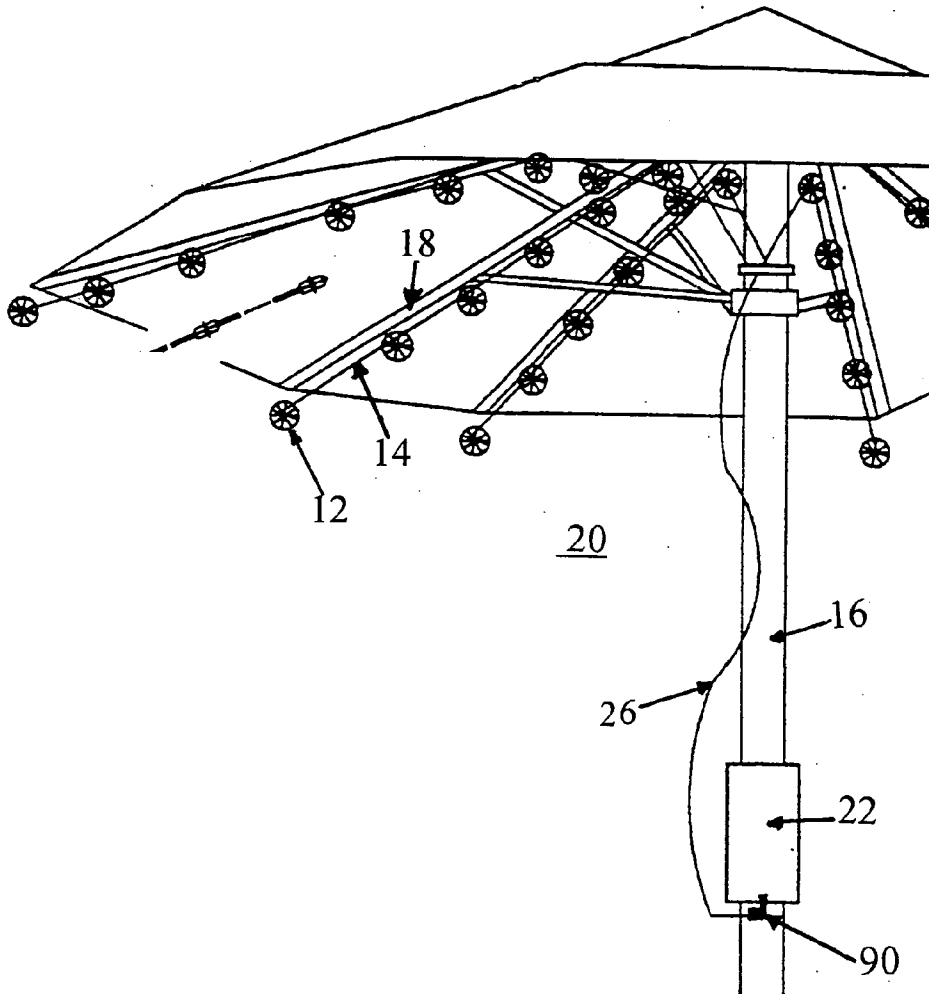
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ABSTRACT

(57) A lighting system is provided for use with a patio umbrella or gazebo. The lighting system has a battery housing or power source, and at least one wire branch, with each wire branch releasably attached to a corresponding one of the ribs of the patio umbrella, or to a portion of a gazebo. A plurality of LED devices are spaced apart along each wire branch, and an interconnecting wire couples the battery housing or the power source to the wire branches.

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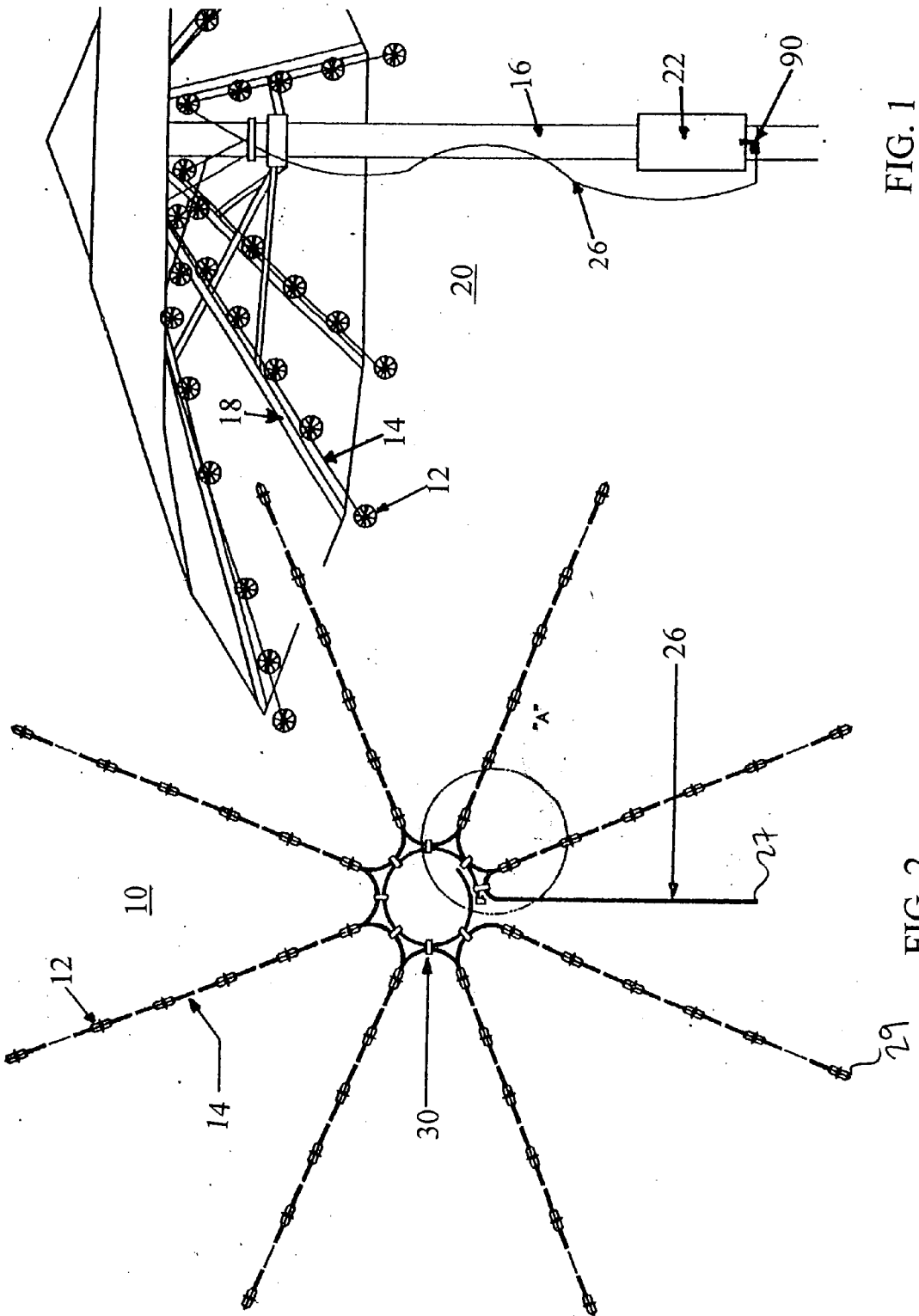


FIG. 1

FIG. 2

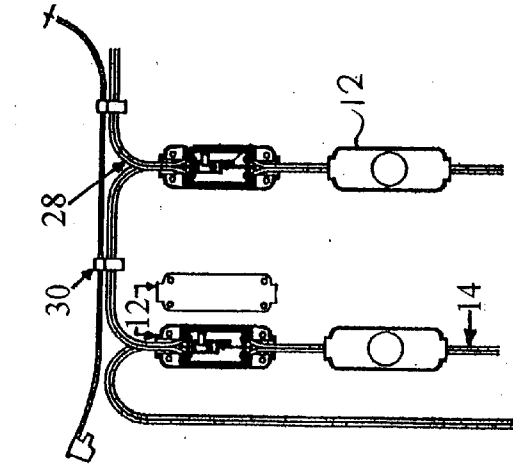


FIG. 3

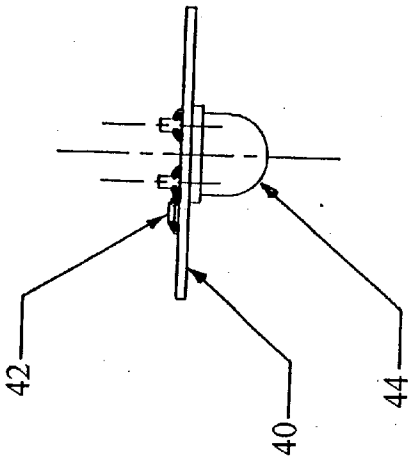


FIG. 5

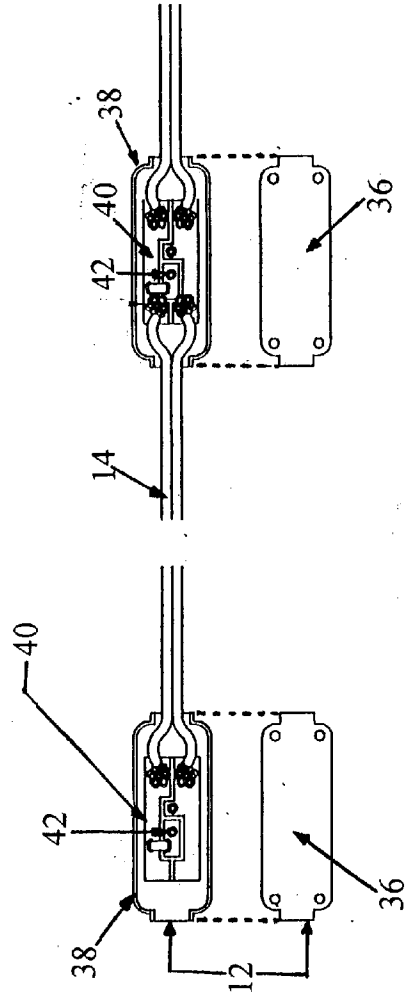


FIG. 4

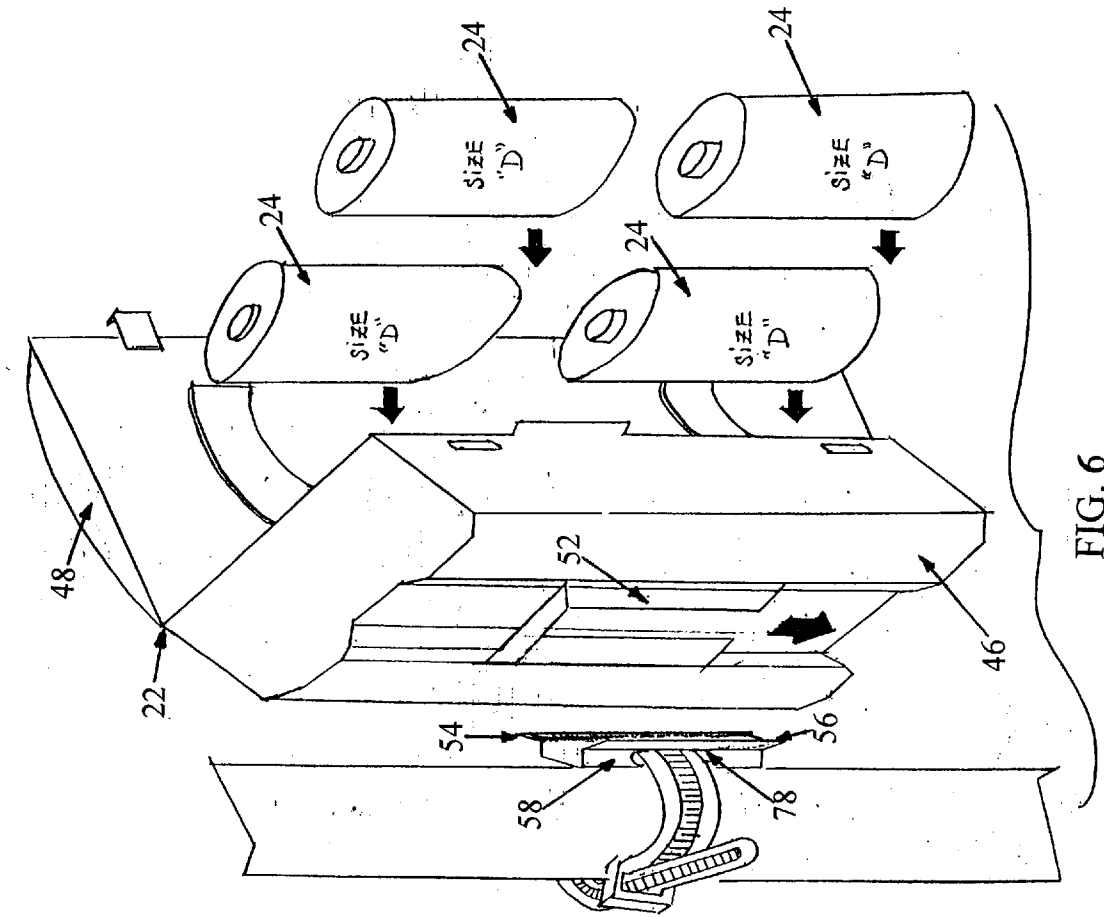


FIG. 6

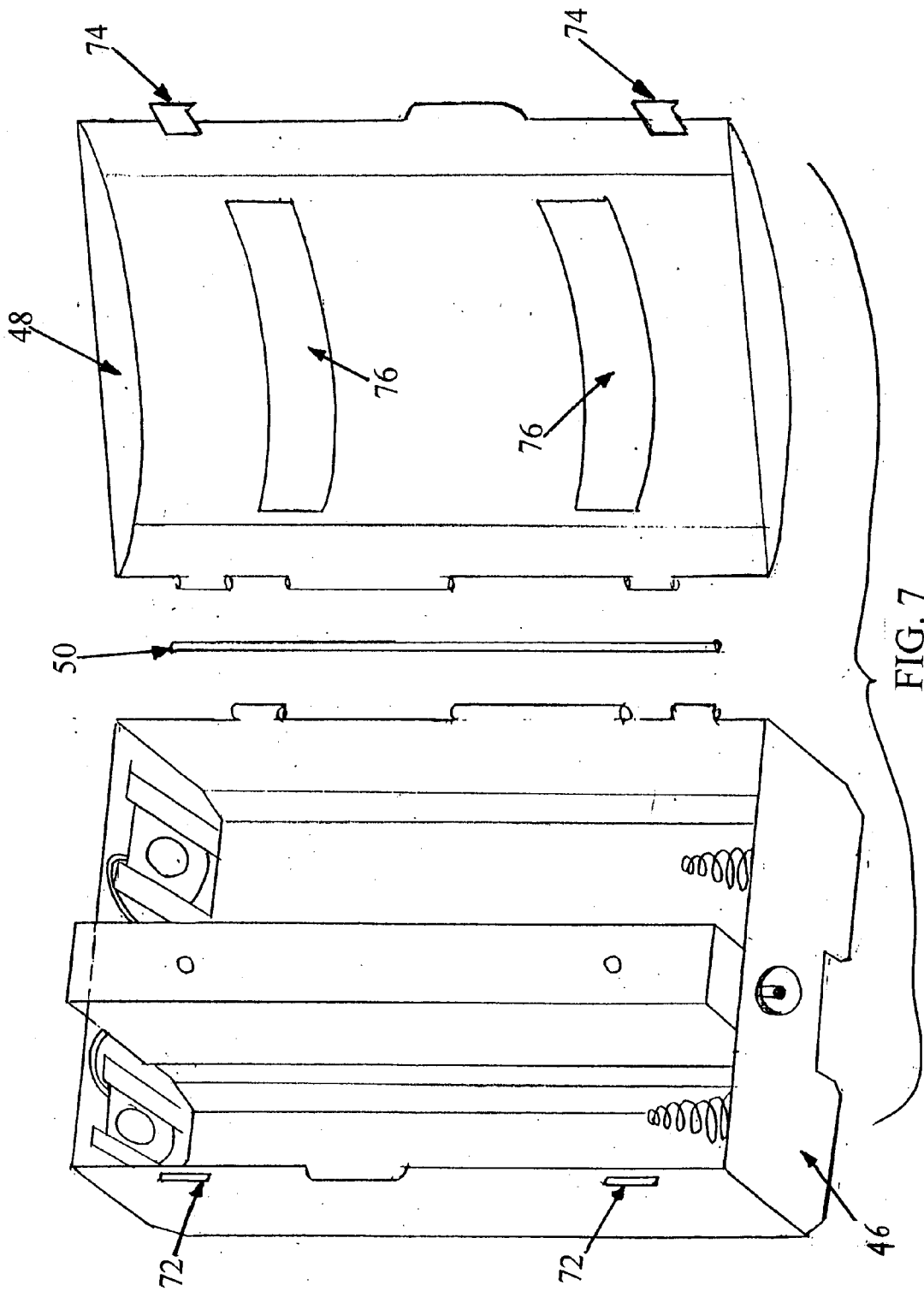


FIG. 7

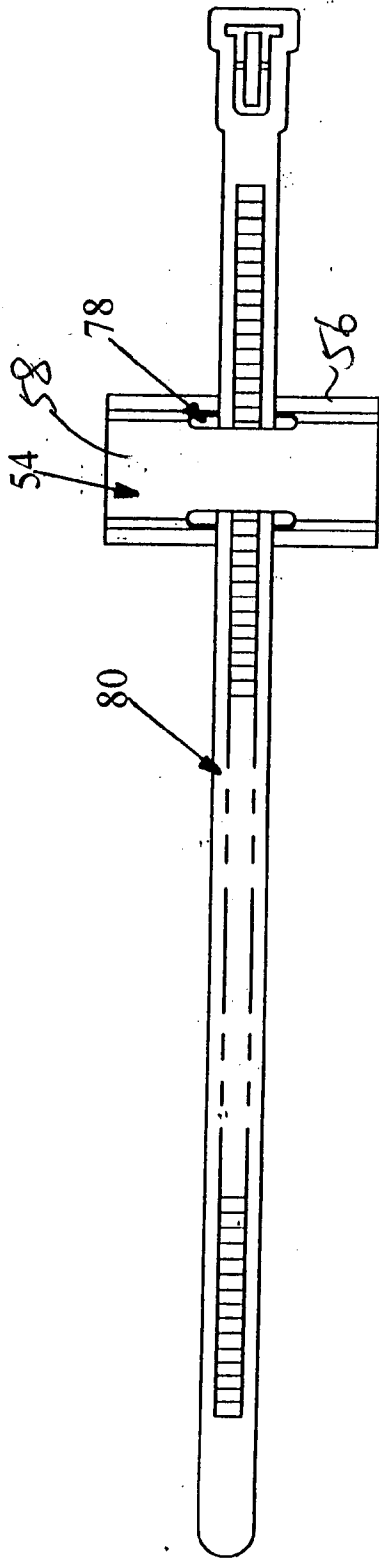


FIG. 8

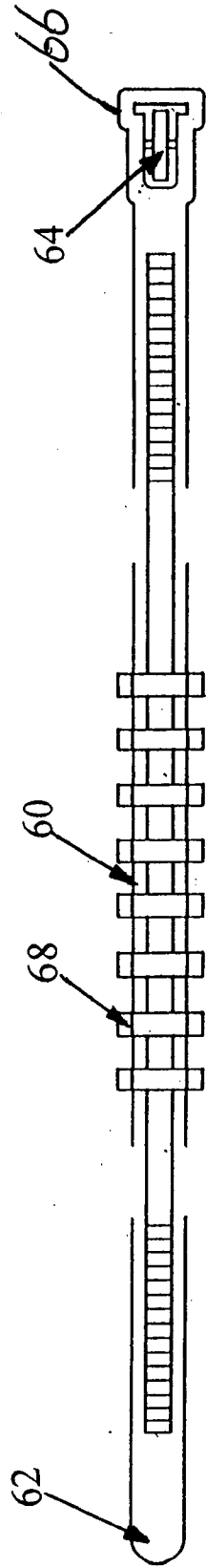
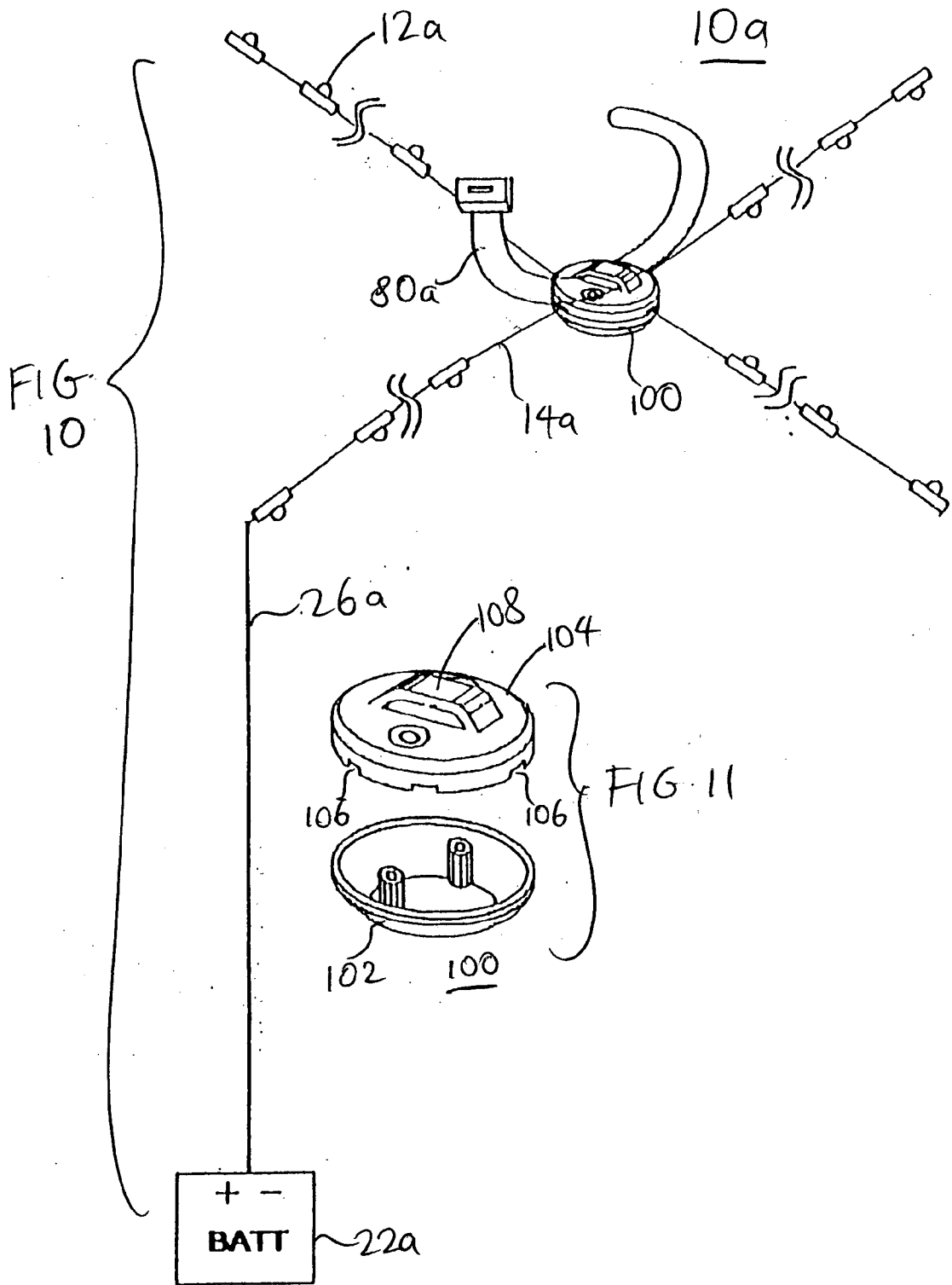


FIG. 9



LED LIGHTING SYSTEM FOR PATIO UMBERELLA

RELATED CASES

[0001] This case is based on Provisional Application No. 60/426,558, filed Nov. 15, 2002, and entitled "Light Emitting Diode (LED) strip light mounting on the rib(s) of outdoor umbrella for lighting purpose and installation and mounting techniques for battery case power supply".

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] 1. Field of the Invention

[0003] The present invention relates to outdoor patio umbrellas and gazebos, and in particular, to a LED lighting system that is adapted to be installed for use with an outdoor patio umbrella or a gazebo.

[0004] 2. Description of the Prior Art

[0005] Outdoor patio umbrellas and gazebos have become increasingly popular as more and more people are beginning to conduct more outdoor activities. For example, outdoor dinner parties and events are becoming more common, and patio umbrellas have been useful in providing shade to tables and chairs that have been placed outdoors for these events. Outdoor events that are held in the evenings, when the sun has set, usually need to address the problem of providing sufficient illumination to the location of the event. In this regard, separate lighting systems had to be provided to illuminate the location of the event.

[0006] There are many different types of lighting systems that are available in the market place. Fluorescent light and incandescent light are commonly used for many applications, but they suffer from several drawbacks. For example, such lighting systems occupy a lot of space and consume a lot of energy. Maintenance can be expensive and these lighting systems can pose fire safety risks.

[0007] Thus, there remains a need to provide improved illumination for outdoor events, and in particular, to the space under a patio umbrella or a gazebo.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0008] It is an objective of the present invention to provide illumination to the space under a patio umbrella or a gazebo.

[0009] It is another objective of the present invention to provide a lighting system that can be safely and conveniently deployed under a patio umbrella or gazebo.

[0010] To accomplish the above objectives, the present invention provides a lighting system for use with a patio umbrella or gazebo, the lighting system having a battery housing or power source, and at least one wire branch, with each wire branch releasably attached to a corresponding one of the ribs of the patio umbrella, or to a portion of a gazebo. A plurality of LED devices are spaced apart along each wire branch, and an interconnecting wire couples the battery housing or the power source to the wire branches.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0011] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a lighting system according to one embodiment of the present invention shown in use with a patio umbrella.

[0012] FIG. 2 is a top plan skeletal view of the patio umbrella of FIG. 1 shown with the lighting system installed for use therewith.

[0013] FIG. 3 is an expanded view of the region labeled "A" in FIG. 2.

[0014] FIG. 4 illustrates a plurality of the LED devices of the lighting system of FIG. 1.

[0015] FIG. 5 is a cross-sectional view of a part of an LED Device of the lighting system of FIG. 1.

[0016] FIG. 6 is an exploded perspective view illustrating how the battery housing of the lighting system of FIG. 1 is secured to an umbrella pole.

[0017] FIG. 7 is an exploded perspective view of the battery housing of the lighting system of FIG. 1.

[0018] FIG. 8 illustrates a battery housing strap that is used to secure the battery housing of the lighting system of FIG. 1 to an umbrella pole.

[0019] FIG. 9 illustrates a pole strap that is used to secure the LED devices of the lighting system of FIG. 1 to a patio umbrella.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0020] The following detailed description is of the best presently contemplated modes of carrying out the invention. This description is not to be taken in a limiting sense, but is made merely for the purpose of illustrating general principles of embodiments of the invention. The scope of the invention is best defined by the appended claims.

[0021] FIGS. 1-9 illustrate a lighting system 10 according to one embodiment of the present invention. The lighting system 10 has a plurality of LED (light emitting diodes) devices 12 that are connected together by wire branches 14 that are connected to the ribs 18 of a patio umbrella 20. The lighting system 10 also includes a battery housing 22 that is adapted to hold one or more batteries 24 that are used to power the LED devices 12. The lighting system 10 further includes a wire 26 that connects the battery housing 22 with the wire strips 14 to deliver power to the LED devices 12. As explained below, the wire 26 can be part of the same wire that makes up the wire strips 14.

[0022] Referring to FIGS. 2-5, the lighting system 10 has a plurality of wire branches 14. The number of wire branches 14 can vary, and can be dependent upon the patio umbrella 20 with which the system 10 is to be used. Each wire branch 14 is adapted to be connected to a corresponding rib 18 by a plurality of releasable ties or VELCRO™ pieces, and carries a plurality of LED devices 12, whose construction is described in greater detail below. Each wire branch 14 is interconnected to an adjacent wire branch 14 by a portion of an interconnecting wire 28, with the interconnecting wire 28 forming a ring, as best seen in FIG. 2. The interconnecting wire 28 is attached to the pole 16 of the patio umbrella 20 via the protrusions 68 of a pole strap 30 (see FIG. 9). The interconnecting wire 28, the separate wire strips 14, and the wire 26 can be formed as a single wire having opposing free ends 27 and 29, as shown in FIG. 2.

[0023] One pole strap 30 is illustrated in greater detail in FIG. 9, and can be embodied in the form of a cable tie 60

having a rounded end **62** that can be inserted through an elongated longitudinal opening **64** at the opposing end **66** of the cable tie **60**. Elongated protrusions **68** are provided along the length of the cable tie **60**, so that the user can select one of the protrusions **68** through which the rounded end **62** can be inserted to secure the interconnecting wire **28** to the pole **16**. Thus, each protrusion **68** defines a different locking position for the cable tie **30**.

[0024] Each LED device **12** has a housing **38** that houses a printed circuit board (PCB) **40**. A housing cover **36** can be attached (e.g., by snap-fit engagement or glue) to the housing **38**. An IC chip driver **42** can be soldered to one side of the PCB **40**, and a conventional LED **44** can be mounted on the other side of the PCB **40**. The PCB **40** can then be soldered to the wire branch **14**. The number of LED devices **12** carried on each wire branch **14**, and the spacing between adjacent LED devices **12** on a wire branch **14**, can be varied depending upon the desired illumination and user requirements. For example, providing a larger number of LED devices **12** on a wire branch **14**, or spacing the LED devices **12** more closely together on a wire branch **14**, will produce brighter illumination. As another example, providing a greater number of LED devices **12** on wire branches **14** to be attached to one side of the patio umbrella **20** will provide greater illumination to one side of the patio umbrella **20**. Since conventional LEDs **44** use much less power than fluorescent and incandescent lights (e.g., one-third the power of fluorescents and one-tenths the power of incandescents), the lighting system **10** of the present invention will utilize less power.

[0025] The battery housing **22** can be provided in a two-piece construction with a chamber housing **46** and a cover **48** that are pivotably connected by a rod **50**. The batteries **24** are retained in the chamber housing **46**. Gaskets **76** are provided on the inner wall of the cover **48** to secure the batteries **24** inside the chamber housing **46**. Locking tabs **74** are provided along a side edge of the cover **48** and adapted to be fitted inside locking openings **72** provided in the chamber housing **46** to secure the cover **48** to the chamber housing **46**. A pocket **52** is formed on the outer surface of the chamber housing **46**, with the pocket **52** adapted to receive a planar mounting bracket **54** therein to secure the battery housing **22** to the pole **16**. Referring to FIGS. 6 and 8, the mounting bracket **54** has a generally planar portion **56** and an enlarged portion **58**, with a bore **78** provided through the enlarged portion **58**. A battery housing strap **80** (which can have the same construction as the pole strap **30**) extends through the bore **78** and functions to secure the mounting bracket **54** (and the battery housing **22** carried thereon) to a selected location along the pole **16**.

[0026] The battery housing **22** provides numerous benefits. First, the battery housing **22** can be mounted on the mounting bracket **54** quickly and conveniently. In this regard, the user only needs to use one hand to slide the pocket **52** over the mounting bracket **54**. Second, the battery housing **22** can be made from a lightweight material, such as plastic, which weighs only about two pounds or less.

[0027] An on/off switch (not shown) can be provided on the battery housing **22**, or connected via another wire to the battery housing **22**, to allow the user to turn on and off the LED devices **12**.

[0028] The user can install the lighting system **10** in the following manner. First, the mounting bracket **54** can be

secured to the pole **16**, and the battery housing **22** secured to the mounting bracket **54**, in the manner described above. Next, the different wire branches **14** can be separated, with one end of each branch **14** left free while the other end of each branch **14** is connected to another wire which forms the ring of the interconnecting wire **28**. One free end of this interconnecting wire **28** is then connected to a plug **90** (see FIG. 1) that is electrically connected to the battery housing **22**. Thereafter, the wire branches **14** are tied to selected ribs **18** using tie members, and the interconnecting wire **28** is tied to pole **16** using the pole straps **30**.

[0029] The user can easily dis-assemble the lighting system **10** from a patio umbrella **20** by releasing the tie members to allow the wire branches **14** to be removed from the ribs **18**, then releasing the pole strap **30**, and finally disengaging the battery housing **22** from the mounting bracket **54**.

[0030] Thus, the present invention provides a lighting system **10** that can be conveniently attached to and removed from the ribs **18** and the pole **16** of a patio umbrella **20**. The construction of the lighting system **10** is simple. The use of a plurality of LED devices **12** allows for the illumination to be varied, and requires minimal power. The provision of the battery housing **22** also means that the lighting system **10** can be powered by batteries, so that unsightly and cumbersome wires can be avoided.

[0031] The lighting system **10** of the present invention can also be used to illuminate a gazebo. Referring to FIG. 10, the lighting **10a** can be very similar to the lighting system **10**, and has a wire **26a**, wire branches **14a** and LED devices **12a** that are the same as the wire **26**, wire branches **14** and LED devices **12**. The wire **26a** can be connected to a power source **22a** which can be a battery housing that is secured to a part of the gazebo. A wire collector **100** is provided to couple all the wire branches **14a** and to distribute the wire branches **14a** radially therefrom. The wire housing **100** has a base **102** and a cover **104** that are secured together. Openings **106** are formed along the periphery of the base **102** and the cover **104**. A wire branch **14a** is adapted to extend through each separate opening **106**. Each wire branch **14a** is adapted to be connected to a different part of the ceiling of the gazebo by a plurality of releasable ties or VELCRO™ pieces. In addition, the cover **104** has a handle **108** which is adapted to receive a strap **80a** therethrough. The strap **80a** can have the same construction as the strap **80**, and operates to secure the wire collector **100** to a part of the gazebo.

[0032] While the description above refers to particular embodiments of the present invention, it will be understood that many modifications may be made without departing from the spirit thereof. The accompanying claims are intended to cover such modifications as would fall within the true scope and spirit of the present invention.

What is claimed is:

1. An assembly, comprising:

- a patio umbrella having a plurality of ribs, and a pole;
- a lighting system having:
 - a battery housing;
 - a wire branch that is releasably attached to one of the ribs;

a plurality of LED devices spaced apart along the wire branch; and

a wire that couples the battery housing to the wire branch.

2. The assembly of claim 1, further including a mounting bracket that is releasably mounted to the pole, with the battery housing being removably mounted to the mounting bracket.

3. The assembly of claim 2, wherein the battery housing has a pocket within which the mounting bracket is received.

4. The assembly of claim 1, wherein the LED device includes a PCB, a chip driver connected to the PCB, and an LED attached to the PCB.

5. The assembly of claim 1, wherein the wire branch comprises a plurality of wire branches, with each wire branch having a plurality of LED devices spaced apart therealong.

6. The assembly of claim 5, further including an interconnecting wire that interconnects adjacent wire branches.

7. The assembly of claim 6, further including means for securing the interconnecting wire to the pole of the umbrella.

8. A lighting system that is used with a patio umbrella having a plurality of ribs, and a pole, the lighting system comprising:

a battery housing;

a wire branch;

a plurality of LED devices spaced apart along the wire branch; and

a wire that couples the battery housing to the wire branch.

9. The system of claim 8, further including a mounting bracket that is releasably mounted to a pole of a patio umbrella, with the battery housing being removably mounted to the mounting bracket.

10. The system of claim 9, wherein the battery housing has a pocket within which the mounting bracket is received.

11. The system of claim 8, wherein the LED device includes a PCB, a chip driver connected to the PCB, and an LED attached to the PCB.

12. The system of claim 8, wherein the wire branch comprises a plurality of wire branches, with each wire branch having a plurality of LED devices spaced apart therealong.

13. The system of claim 12, further including an interconnecting wire that interconnects adjacent wire branches.

14. The system of claim 13, further including means for securing the interconnecting wire to the pole.

15. A lighting system that is used with a gazebo, the lighting system comprising:

a power source;

a wire branch;

a plurality of LED devices spaced apart along the wire branch; and

a wire that couples the power source to the wire branch.

16. The system of claim 15, wherein each LED device includes a PCB, a chip driver connected to the PCB, and an LED attached to the PCB.

17. The system of claim 15, wherein the wire branch comprises a plurality of wire branches, with each wire branch having a plurality of LED devices spaced apart therealong.

18. The system of claim 17, further including an interconnecting wire that interconnects adjacent wire branches.

19. The system of claim 17, further including a collector that couples the plurality of wire branches.

* * * * *