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UTILITY UNIT FOR ELECTRIC APPLIANCES AND THE LIKE

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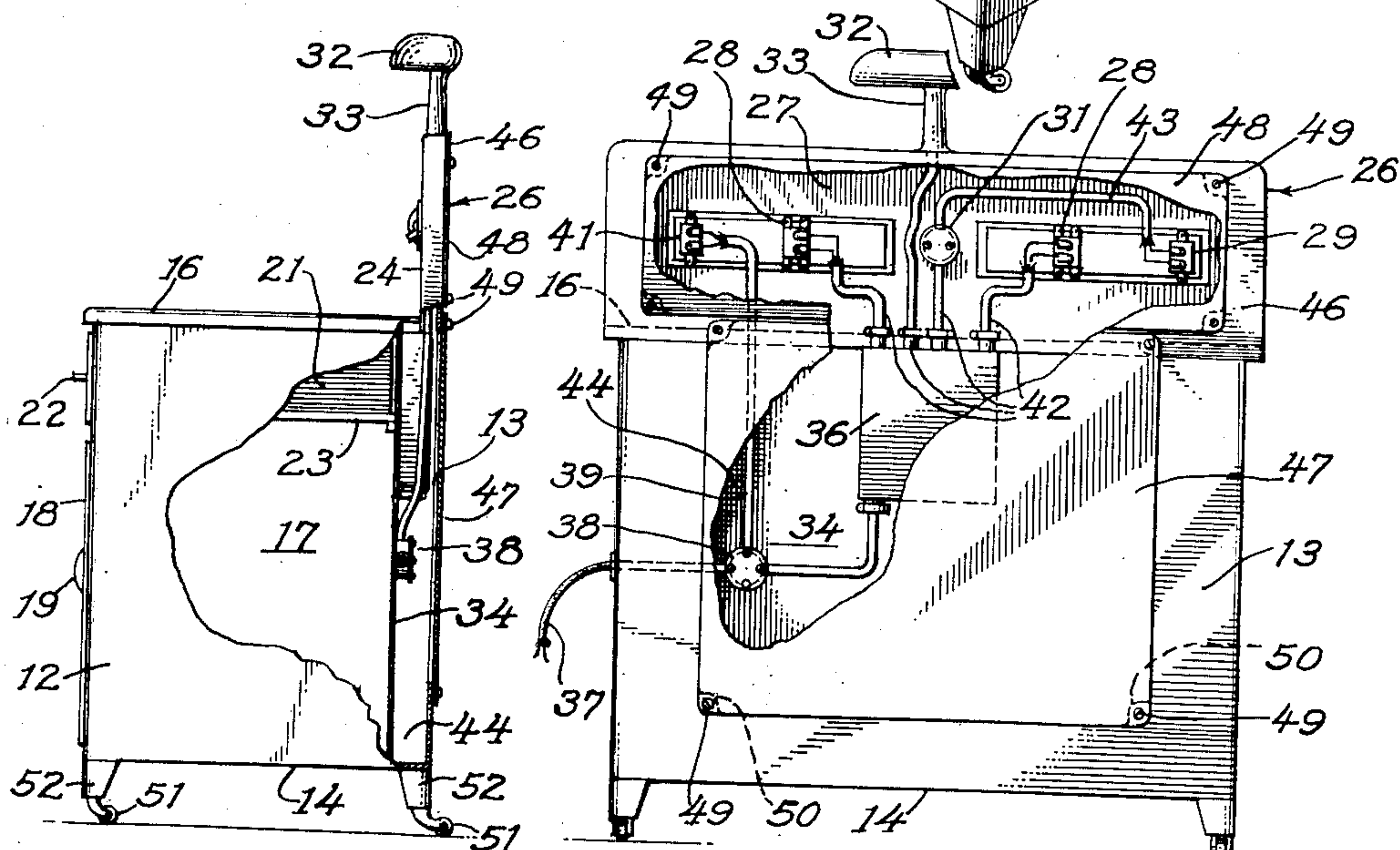
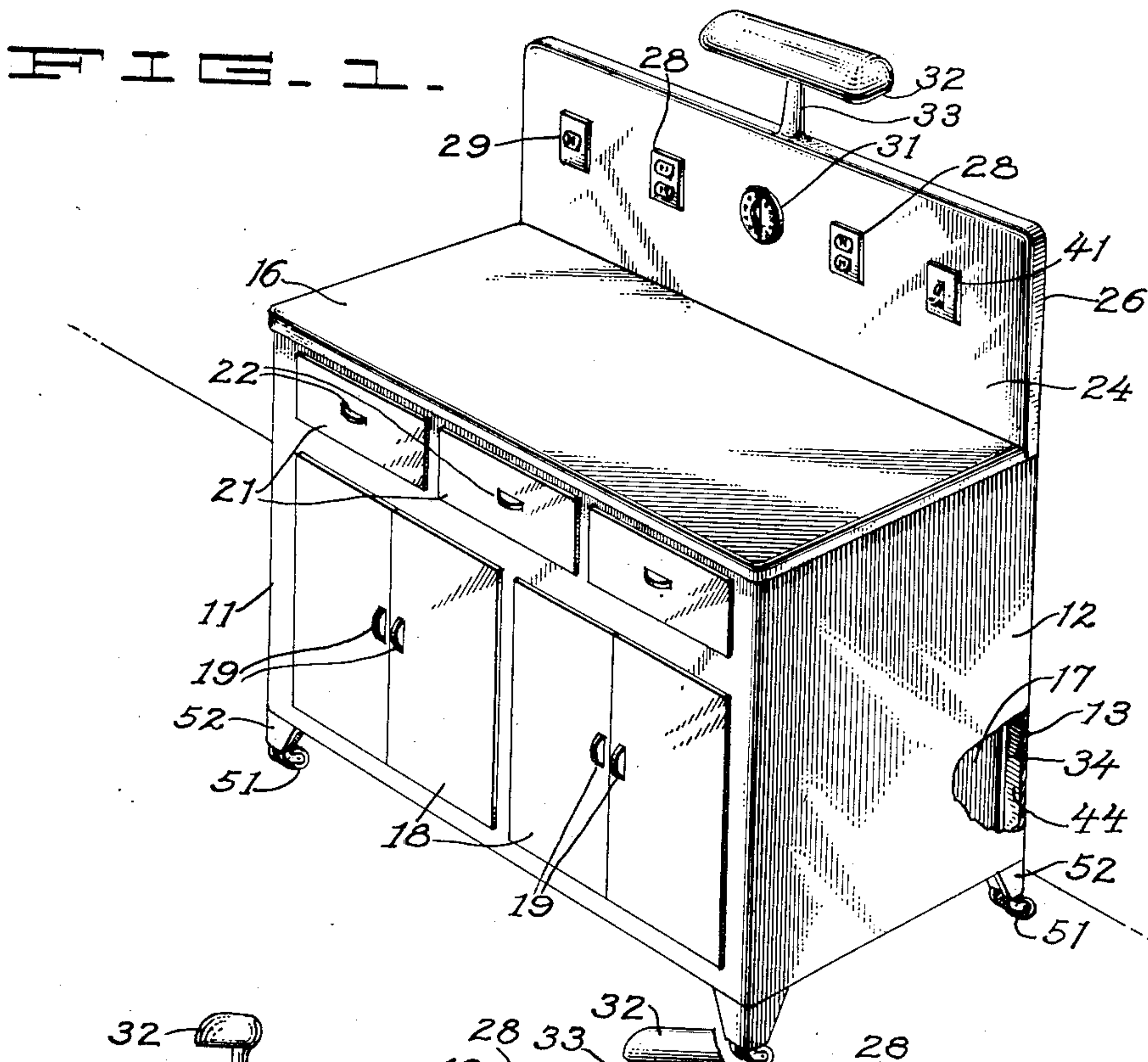


FIG. 3.

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UTILITY UNIT FOR ELECTRIC APPLIANCES AND THE LIKE

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2 Claims. (Cl. 317—112)

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This invention relates to utility units, and is particularly directed to a structure in which storage, work space, and electrical sockets may be conveniently disposed in a single compact unit.

In the average home kitchen, the housewife or maid is required to exert a great deal of effort in using electrical appliances such as mixers, broilers, roasters or the like, due in part to the fact that the storage space for such appliances is generally remote from the work table on which they are used, and also due to the often remotely situated wall sockets necessitating the use of undesirably lengthy electrical cords, or requiring the user to move the appliances into closer proximity to the sockets, but in a less desirable location.

It is therefore an object of the present invention to provide a portable storage unit for such appliances in which a work table is included in adjacency to the storage unit and to a plurality of electrical sockets.

A further object of our invention is to provide a unit of the type described in which the electrical distribution panel, wiring, fuse box and the like are all disposed in a normally inaccessible and protected portion of the unit, but which may be readily exposed for servicing the same.

Another object of this invention is to provide a unit of the foregoing characteristics which readily lends itself to mass production manufacturing methods whereby the cost of the same may be maintained at a reasonable figure.

A still further object of the invention is to provide a structure of the nature referred to in which a plurality of electrical sockets may be located substantially immediately adjacent to a central distributing panel thereby minimizing the length of conduits required and simplifying the construction of the unit.

The invention possesses other objects and features of advantage, some of which, with the foregoing, will be set forth in the following description of the preferred form of the invention which is illustrated in the drawing accompanying and forming part of the specification. It is to be understood, however, that variations in the showing made by the said drawing and description may be adopted within the scope of the invention as set forth in the claims.

Referring to the drawing:

Figure 1 is a front perspective view of a utility unit embodying the features of our present invention.

Figure 2 is a side view of the unit with portions of the drawing being broken away in order to more clearly disclose the internal structure.

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Figure 3 is a rear view of the unit with portions of the drawing broken away to disclose the electrical distribution arrangement.

The unit of our invention comprises a generally box-like structure which includes a front wall 11, side walls 12, rear wall 13, a base 14, and a top wall 16, the said walls and base cooperating to define an enclosed chamber 17. As will be understood, the chamber 17 is arranged to be used for the storage of electrical appliances or the like, and in order to afford access to the chamber, front wall 11 is provided with openings in which are operatively inserted one or more hinged doors 18 which completely overlie the openings when in closed position. Such doors are provided with the usual handles or pull knobs 19 to facilitate the opening or closing thereof. Immediately above the doors 18 and just under the top wall 16, we provide a plurality of drawers 21 similarly equipped with pull knobs 22, the drawers riding on tracks 23 disposed within the chamber. From the foregoing it will be seen that the aforesaid appliances may be stored in the chamber 17, and when it is desired to use the same, they may be conveniently placed on the unobstructed top wall 16 which serves as a work table for the person using the same. Also, by providing the drawers in the unit, various needed accessories such as mixing spoons, scrapers and the like are readily available for use with the appliances.

As was previously mentioned, the electrical appliances for which this unit was primarily designed require the provision of electrical sockets to which the appliances may be operatively connected. In most instances, appliances such as mixers, beaters, roasters, broilers, etc., have a relatively short electric cord, and it is therefore essential that such sockets be situated in close proximity to the work surface on which the appliances are placed. As here shown, such sockets are provided on the front plate 24 of a relatively flat housing 26, the latter defining a chamber 27 which is open at the bottom end thereof for a purpose to be hereinafter described. The housing is preferably vertically aligned with rear wall 13 so as to not interfere with the work area of top wall 16. Preferably mounted on the plate 24 are a pair of dual outlets 28, a timed appliance outlet 29, and a timer 31 for the timed outlet, and as such connections are well known in the art, no further explanation of their operation is deemed necessary. If desired, a lamp 32 may also be mounted on the housing 26 by means of a suitable bracket 33 extending upwardly therefrom.

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Means are provided for furnishing electrical current to the aforesaid outlets and timers, and it is important that such means be effectively isolated from possible contact by the appliances or by the user, and it is equally important that the electrical distribution system does not interfere to any substantial extent with the available storage space or with the area of the working surface. We have provided a novel arrangement to accomplish the foregoing by inserting a panel 34 in the chamber 17 adjacent to and desirably coextensive with rear wall 13, and mounting on the rear side of the panel the necessary electrical connections. As here disclosed, such connections include a master distribution box 36 into which is led a conduit 37 which is connected to a suitable source of current, not shown; the conduit 37 preferably of a length to permit moving the entire unit from place to place within a room. Conduit 37, prior to its introduction in the distribution box 36, passes through a fuse box 38 which is provided for the well known reasons. A conduit 39 also enters fuse box 38 and terminates in a master switch 41 mounted on the housing 26 so that all current to the master distribution box may be selectively turned on or off. As will be clear, branch conduits 42 carry current from the distribution box to the respective outlets, lamp and timer, with an additional conduit 43 interconnecting the timer 31 to the timed outlet 29 in a manner familiar to those skilled in the art. With the foregoing arrangement, it is seen that all of the electrical connections and appurtenances are disposed within a chamber 44 to the rear of and separated from chamber 17 by the panel 34. It will also be understood that conduits 39 and 42 pass directly from chamber 44 into chamber 27 in which the outlets are arranged.

Access is afforded to the wiring system through both rear wall 13 of the main structure as well as through the rear plate 46 of housing 26. This may be effected by means of panels 47 and 48 which overlie openings formed in wall 13 and plate 46 respectively and may be releasably secured to tabs 50 thereof in any desirable manner, such as by screws 49 or the like so as to be flush with the outer surfaces thereof. Thus, while the conduits and distribution system are completely isolated from the storage chamber 17 and working surface 16 by confining the same in chambers 27 and 44, they are readily available for repair or alteration should the same be necessary.

In order to freely move the unit over the floor on which it is placed, it is preferable to mount the same on swivel casters 51 which may be mounted at the lower portion of supporting legs 52 disposed at the bottom corners of the unit. Or, if desired, the legs may be omitted so that the unit will be flush with the floor and reduce the overall height thereof.

From the foregoing, it will be seen that we have provided a simple, convenient structure arranged to vastly simplify the storing, connecting and operation of the numerous types of electrical appliances utilized in the average kitchen.

We claim:

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1. A utility unit comprising a first housing including front, side, rear, bottom and top wall surfaces cooperating to define a substantially enclosed first chamber, a panel member in said first chamber and spaced from and cooperating with said rear wall surface to define a second chamber of a width substantially less than the spacing between said panel member and said front wall, a second housing defining a third chamber immediately over and in communication with said second chamber, means on said second housing adjacent said top wall surface defining a plurality of electrical sockets arranged to receive terminal plugs of a conductor member, an electrical distribution panel mounted on the rear surface of said panel member and disposed in said second chamber, a main current carrying conductor operatively connected to said distribution panel and to a source of electricity, current carrying conductors operatively inserted between said distribution panel and said connectors, and means on said rear wall surface for obtaining access to said distribution panel.

2. A utility unit comprising a first housing including front, side, rear, bottom and top wall surfaces cooperating to define a substantially enclosed first chamber and spaced from and cooperating with said rear wall surface to define a narrow second chamber, a second housing defining a third chamber immediately over and in communication with said second chamber, means on said second housing adjacent said top wall surface defining a plurality of electrical sockets arranged to receive terminal plugs of a conductor member, a timed appliance outlet and a timer element mounted on said second housing, an electrical distribution panel mounted on said panel member and disposed in said second chamber, a main current carrying conductor operatively connected to said distribution panel and to a source of electricity, current carrying conductors operatively connecting said distribution panel and said sockets, said timer outlet and said timer element, a current carrying conductor operatively connecting said timer outlet and said timer element, switch means mounted on said second housing and operatively connected to said main current carrying conductor intermediate said electricity source and said distribution panel whereby current to said latter panel may be selectively opened or closed, means in said rear wall surface and in the rear wall of said second housing whereby said distribution panel, conductors, outlets and sockets may be selectively opened and closed to the exterior of the unit.

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