The present invention relates to articles of attraction for infants and young children and more particularly to place mats to be used on the eating table during the feeding of such infants or children.

Infants are notoriously poor eaters and feeding time often deteriorates into a distasteful chore. However, because infants lack the ability of concentration, their attention is easily distracted so they can be led to be fed without being consciously aware of what they are doing.

An object of the invention is to provide a place mat for the feeding table for infants and young children that will sufficiently distract their attention during feeding time so they may be made happy and can be induced to eat without necessarily focusing their attention on the food they are eating.

Another object of the invention is to provide a decorative place mat that is formed to include as part thereof a toy sound producing device that the child itself or the person feeding the child may operate to distract the attention of the child.

A feature of the invention resides in the arrangement of details of the place mat enabling it to be formed by a simple stamping process such that the sound producing device is adapted to be integrally connected with it and retained thereby in an upright position thereby constituting a continuous eye catching attraction for the distraction of the feeding child.

Other and further objects of this invention reside in the structures and arrangements hereinafter more fully described with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

FIG. 1 is a plan view of the combined place mat and sound making device constructed according to the teaching of the invention.

FIG. 2 is a cross-section of FIG. 1 taken along lines 2-2 thereof.

FIG. 3 is a bottom view of FIG. 2.

Referring now to the drawing, the combined place mat and sound producing device there shown is generally identified by the numeral 20. The place mat 20 may be of any suitable sheet-like absorbent material. In practice, place mats have been made of absorbent sheet paper or other wood pulp products because the same are relatively inexpensive, easily die cut and can be shaped by die drawing processes to form indent or ridges of decorative designs in their surfaces. Although the place mat 20 here shown may have any desired decorative design or appearance, none is actually illustrated in the drawing so that the same will not detract from the basic detail of invention.

The sound producing device is generally identified by the numeral 14. It comprises a body 16 of rigid material that has a passageway 18 extending longitudinally therein. The upper portion of the body 16 is formed with a tapered outer side 20 narrowing in the upward direction to accommodate the placement there over and securement to the body 16 of an air bulb 22. The air bulb 22 is adapted to be manually actuated and, therefore, it is formed of a resilient or flexible membranous material as rubber or the like. The neck of the bulb 22 is fitted over the narrowed upward portion of the tapered side 20 and slid downwardly therealong until it snugly engages the widened portion of the side 20. The body 16 is formed with an annular recess or groove 24 that is defined completely about the periphery thereof. The very tip of the bulb 22 may be directed into the recess or groove for positive securement to the body 16. Positioned within the air passageway 18 is an air actuated reed 26 that emits a sound as air is caused to move about it.

The combined place mat and sound producing device 10 is adapted to be positioned on any convenient feeding table surface such as the surface 28 as shown in FIG. 2. The sound producing device 14 is securely mounted to the place mat 12 and retained thereby in an upright position extending well above the upper or exposed surface of the place mat to form an attractive distraction for the feeding child. However, in order to enable the proper securement of the sound producing device 14 to the place mat 12 and further to insure its proper operation, the place mat 12 is formed with an upwardly directed deformation or indentation that results in a raised wall 30 that is adapted to hug and surround the body 16 when the same is mounted on the place mat 12.

The deformation in the place mat 12 defines an air pocket 32. The deformation includes an opening 34, the defining wall of which is smaller than that of the body 16 and is adapted to snap into the recess or groove 24 when the body extends therethrough to engage therewith and retain the body mounted on the place mat 12. The defining wall of the opening 34 is positioned lower than the raised height of the wall 30 and is spaced radially inward therefrom so that both the raised wall 30 and the defining wall of the opening 34 cooperate frictionally with the corresponding mating surface of the body 16 and the surfaces of its groove 24 to retain the sound producing device 14 in its upright position secured to the sheet member of the place mat 12. It will be noted that the lower end of the body 16 retained to the sheet member of the place mat 12 is spaced from the feeding table surface 28 and above the bottom surface of the mat 12 whereby it constantly communicates with the air pocket 32 formed therebetween.

When the combined place mat and sound producing device 10 is placed on a feeding table surface 28, the area of the place mat 12 in contact with the feeding table surface is sufficient to support the sound producing device 14 above it and directly in front of the feeding child. The location of the sound producing device 14 is such with respect to the child that the child's attention can be distracted by manually squeezing the bulb 22.

Upon squeezing the bulb, air is expelled from it through the passageway 18 about the reed to vibrate and produce a distracting sound. Relaxation of manual pressure on the bulb 22 will permit it to return to original condition to withdraw air from the pocket 32 therebeneath back through the passageway 18 about the reed and into the bulb once again. The support provided at the surrounding raised wall 30 and the defining wall of the opening 34 is sufficient to retain the pocket 32 and thereby ensure a constant supply of air for the operation of the sound producing device 14. In practice, it has been found that the pocket 32 may be connected with atmospheric air by deforming portions of the underside or bottom of the sheet member of the place mat 12 with grooved recesses 36 that communicate atmospheric air to the pocket 32.

While there have been shown and described and pointed out the fundamental novel features of the invention as applied to a preferred embodiment thereof, it will be understood that various omissions and substitutions and changes in the form and details of the device illustrated and in its operation may be made by those skilled in the art, without departing from the spirit of the invention.
It is the intention, therefore, to be limited only as indicated by the scope of the claims appended hereto.

I claim:

1. A place mat for use in the feeding of infants and young children comprising a sheet member having a lower surface to be positioned on a feeding table and an upper surface facing the feeding child, a sound producing device positioned upright with respect to said upper surface and extending upward beyond the confines thereof for manual actuation to produce a sound therefrom at the lower surface of said sheet member, said sheet member having an opening defined therein, said device having a sound producing body extending through said opening at its lower end and said body including a groove formed thereabout, the wall defining said opening being smaller in extent than the groove of said body to frictionally engage said body in said groove to retain said device mounted on said sheet member, a raised wall formed in said sheet member and spaced outwardly of and about said opening, said raised wall surrounding said mounting body to retain the same in its upright position with respect to said upper surface, the sound producing end of said body being spaced upward from said lower surface and the feeding table to define a pocket of air therebetween, and a recess in said sheet member communicating atmospheric air to said pocket of air.

2. A place mat as in claim 1, said sound producing body including air actuated reed means and an air passageway extending therethrough, and a manually actuated resilient bulb supported on said body to receive air through the passageway thereof from said pocket and to expel the same therethrough to actuate said reed.

3. The combination of a feeding place mat and sound producing device comprising, a sheet member positionable at its lower surface on a feeding table and including an upwardly raised area defining an air pocket with the feeding table and having an opening defined therein, said sound producing device being positioned upright, said device including a body having a through passageway therein in communication with said air pocket and an air actuated sound producing reed in said passageway, a manually operated air bulb supported on one end of said body to move air through said passageway to and from said air pocket to actuate said reed, means on said body cooperating with the defining wall of said opening to support said body in said opening in a position spaced upward from the feeding table, and means in said sheet member communicating atmospheric air to said air pocket.

4. The combination of an infant feeding place mat and sound producing device as in claim 3, said raised area including an upwardly directed wall formed on said sheet and surrounding said body to support the same in its upright position.

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