

# Kids' KOrner

## Scents Evoke Powerful Memories For Many, Survey Reveals

WASHINGTON — On walks around her neighborhood, a California woman pauses to sniff an oleander blossom.

"Instantly," she writes, "I am 10 years old again, standing barefoot in the soft, dry desert sand of the summer camp near Alexandria, Egypt, where I spent nearly every summer of my childhood."

Years after a "sad affair of the heart" in the 1950s, a Missouri dentist gets a whiff of a friend's cologne that reminds him of the after-shave lotion he had worn in those days. "Bang! I was getting a teen-ager's nervous flutters in the stomach all over again," he writes.

### Hugging Old Suits

A lonely widow climbs the stairs to her husband's empty bedroom, opens the closet door, and pulls out his old suits. She hugs them because they still carry his trademark odors — Old Spice and smoking tobacco. "I stand there, making believe, close my eyes, and cry," she writes.

These responses are contained in the nearly 1,700 letters the National Geographic Society has received since September, when a scientific scratch-and-sniff survey was mailed to the society's nearly 11 million members.

About 1.5 million members worldwide — an unusually large percentage for such mailings — have returned the survey. Its computerized results will be analyzed by scientists at the Monell Chemical Senses Center of Philadelphia and published by National Geographic magazine in mid-1987.

Monell scientists, too, have answered dozens of letters responding to the survey, many of them related to medical questions. The correspondence leaves no

doubts about the power of the little-understood sense of smell to evoke sharp memories and powerful emotions, and occasionally to cause physical and mental anguish.

One of the scratch-and-sniff panels "brought back memories of childhood" to a Florida woman, "of standing by the kitchen counter on a brisk autumn evening watching my mother strain the cloves from the hot cider she was pouring into my waiting mug."

A Texas woman describes the odors that attracted her to her mate: "My husband's smell is pretty constant, very sweet and pleasant and clean, like the mixture of clover and alfalfa hay my dad used to bale."

### Craved Dangerous Smell

The four pregnancies of an Illinois woman caused certain odors to become unusually acute to her. During one pregnancy, she writes, "I craved the smell of car exhaust — dangerous, to say the least!" During her last pregnancy, the smell of the family dog made her sick, and she repeatedly bathed it with sweat-scented shampoo.

One of the unusual smelled disorders described in the letters to Monell is that of a New York City student who emits unpleasant odors through his nose in humid weather. The center has offered to help him find the cause.

A California woman writes Charles J. Wysocki, one of two Monell scientists who are working on the survey — the other is Avery Gilbert — that flu has left her with a change in the taste of some foods but not others. "HELP — I want to enjoy those foods again," she writes. Wysocki does what he can for

her. First he explains that, except for sweet, sour, bitter, and salty, taste is really smell. "Your situation is unique" because the loss is partial and not total, he writes. He sends her a list of taste and smell centers and invites her to visit Monell if she comes East.

In a letter to the Geographic, another woman from California, who became deaf in adulthood, writes that improved scent detection accompanied her deafness: "It could result from increased memory and/or a true extending of the scent-detecting physiology."

A minister who directs a support group of chemically sensitive people is one of several Society members who found the survey's scents offensive. "I had to air your magazine outside for days, and it still smelled," she writes. "We are living a life of misery. I was not so sensitive until I got overwhelmed with odors through the years."

### Dominated By Odors

Wood smoke from a neighbor's fireplace drove an elderly upstate New York couple from their home and ruined his wife's health. The

husband writes: "Smells are always on her mind. This has taken over her life, and I'm afraid that only death will release her from the pain of such an unhappy existence..."

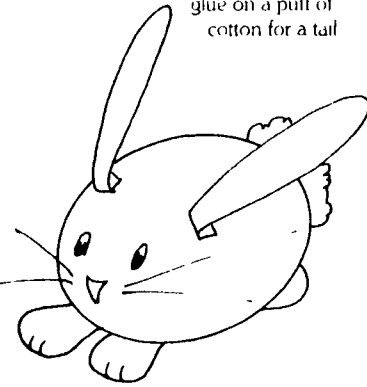
In contrast, some of the letters are lighthearted. One man suggests employing his wife in smell tests. "She is an expert," he writes. "She is a Baptist and can smell beer over the telephone."

A woman in Texas seeks advice. "I smell things I see on TV," she writes. "Everyone tells me I'm crazy. What do you think?"



### SNOW BUNNY

To make this super snow bunny cut out paper ears, eyes, nose, whiskers, and feet. Glue them onto a plastic egg (you can use the kind that some pantyhose come in). Then glue on a puff of cotton for a tail.



### SNOW FOOLIN'

When is a boat like a pile of snow?  
When it is adrift.

What is often plowed but never planted?  
Snow.

Where would a polar bear keep its money?  
In a snow bank.

Why should you never tell jokes while ice-skating?  
The ice might crack up.



## COLOR THIS!

- |           |              |
|-----------|--------------|
| 1. BLACK  | 6. PINK      |
| 2. RED    | 7. GREEN     |
| 3. YELLOW | 8. LT BROWN  |
| 4. BLUE   | 9. LT BLUE   |
| 5. BROWN  | 10. LT GREEN |

WRASSE, "THE LITTLE DOCTOR FISH" THIS FISH SWIMS RIGHT UP TO THE BIG FISH, PUTS ITS HEAD INTO THE BIG FISH'S MOUTH AND CLEANS ITS TEETH, THEN IT WILL CLEAN THE FISH'S EYES AND FINS. THE BIG FISH SEEMS TO KNOW WHEN THE WRASSE IS HELPING IT. THIS IS WHY THE LARGER FISH DO NOT EAT THEM.

