

**PENN STATE STUDIES
BEETLES FOR
CHOLSTROL CONVRSION**

Scientists at Penn State university are investigating the composition of the defen-

sive secretions of water beetles. These defensive secretions contain steroids possessing hormonal properties. The beetles offer a somewhat unique opportunity to investigate the mechanism of the biological conversion of cholesterol into active mammalian hormones.

Dr. Ralph O. Mumma of Penn State described his preliminary studies with diving water beetles (lytiscidae family) at the 162nd national meeting of the American Chemical Society Sept. 15 in Washington, D. C.

The dytiscide beetles have evolved a specialized gland, he indicated, to convert dietary cholesterol into compounds offensive to aquatic vertebrates such as frogs and fish. When swallowed by fish or frogs, the beetles excrete a viscous, milky liquid which generally causes the beetles to be regurgitated alive.

The defensive secretion of the beetle contains the steroid cortexone, a highly active regulator of the sodium-potassium ion balance in mammals.

Cortexone has been isolat-

ed from extracts of the whole insect as well as from the prothoracic defensive glands located immediately behind the head, and from the secretions themselves.

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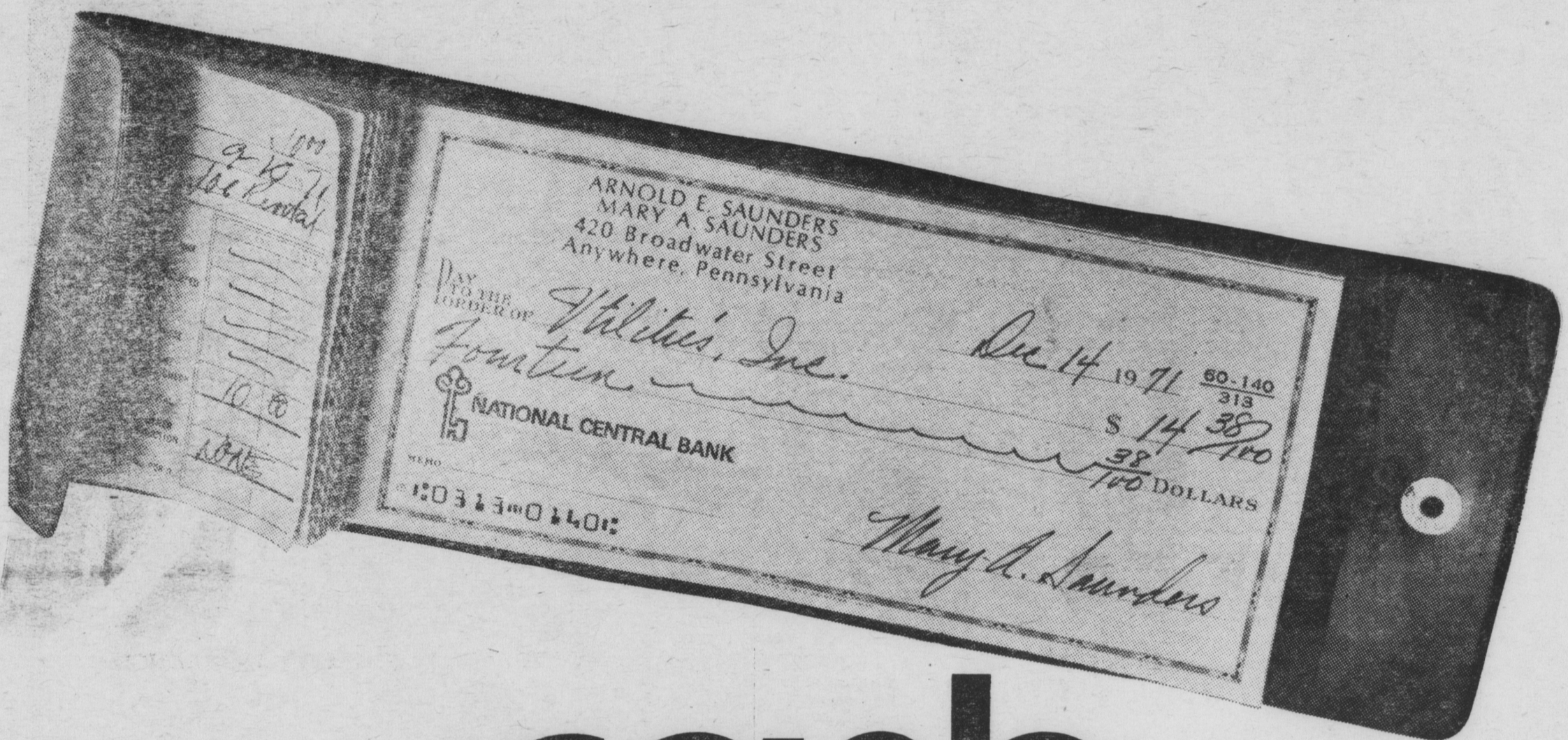
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