

How Are Your Tastebuds?

Taste-Testing Experiments Conducted at Duke



If you were blindfolded, with only your nose and tongue to guide you, could you mistake a banana for eggplant? A lemon for macaroni? Or beef for tuna fish?

These were some of the mistakes that were made when researchers at Duke set out to test how sensitive various groups of people are to the taste and smell of foods they eat every day.

The group with the keenest knack for identifying foods were the obese patients from Duke's Dietary Rehabilitation Clinic. Those who scored worst were a group of elderly volunteers. In between were younger people of normal weight.

Sixty-nine per cent of the obese patients recognized the strained bananas,

but only 41 per cent of the normal weight group and 24 per cent of the elderly group recognized it. Some of the guesses given by the elderly volunteers included eggplant, mango, tomato, rhubarb and apricot.

Dr. Susan Schiffman, assistant professor of medical psychology, conducted the experiments as part of an effort to determine the nature of taste and ways that this knowledge could be used.

"We know that older people often complain that most of the food they eat tastes bitter or sour," she said. "One of the flavors which they identified most readily in the experiment was coffee, which is bitter."

"It seems that as people grow older the taste buds in the front—the ones responsible for identifying sweet and salty tastes—atrophy first, and the bitter and sour ones last," Dr. Schiffman said.

She said taste experiments such as hers may help to identify foods that older people like best and lead to ways to enhance the flavors of foods and improve the diets of older people.

Information on obese patients' sensitivities to the taste and smell of food could lead to ways to help them change their eating habits, she said.

For example, although the obese patients were the best at recognizing the foods they were given during the experiment, they disliked most of the foods.

Dr. Schiffman said this may be partly because of the way the food was prepared. The foods were prepared without seasoning then put through a blender or strainer until they were the consistency of baby food.

"When we asked the obese patients what foods they did like and what they ate most, they mentioned tactile, crunchy things like popcorn, potato chips and pizza," Dr. Schiffman said.

She said that apparently the texture and crunchiness of foods is important to

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DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA

Economists Receive Grant To Examine Z.P.G. Effects

Two distinguished economists at Duke have been awarded a National Science Foundation grant to study the effects of the trend toward zero population growth on the nation's economy.

The two are Dr. Joseph J. Spengler, James B. Duke professor emeritus of economics, and Dr. Juanita M. Kreps, also a James B. Duke professor of economics. One of Spengler's primary interests over

the past 40 years has been problems of population and resources, and Kreps is a widely known specialist in the economics of aging.

The \$67,000 grant is from Research Applied to National Needs (RANN), a section of the National Science Foundation. The two economists will be working as research investigators in the Center for the Study of Aging and Human Development.

Dr. George Maddox, director of the center, said demographers have forecast that the nation is moving toward a stable population in which the number of births will equal the number of deaths. Throughout the history of the United States, the birth rate has far outstripped the death rate.

As the birth rate goes down, the proportion of elderly people in our population grows, Maddox said. No one yet knows just what percentage of the population will be in the elderly age bracket when we reach zero population growth, he said.

This will be one of the questions Spengler and Kreps will address. Another area deals with the economic implications of the emerging age structure of the population.

There will be more people in the aged, often dependent, years who must be supported by the smaller proportion of people who are in their earning and producing years. Will this be compensated for by the smaller number of dependent children the work force must support? How large will the work force of the future be, when fewer young people are coming into it? Will we need to change the character of the labor force, by raising the retirement age, for example?

"After all these years of talking about zero population growth, are we ready to face the economic and social implications of it?" Maddox asked.

A printed report of the study will be prepared and circulated to business and government leaders by the National Science Foundation, and the aging center will sponsor a workshop to acquaint policy and decision-makers with the findings.

University Starts Car Pool Service

The university is starting a program to aid people who might want to form or join a car pool.

Here's the way it will work:

This week large maps of Durham County were to be mounted in the Traffic Office at 2010 Campus Drive, in the Allen Building, West Union Building, Biological Sciences Building, Computation Center, East Duke Building and in Duke Hospital.

The map's location in the hospital is a corridor wall beside the Personnel Office, first floor of the Yellow Zone.

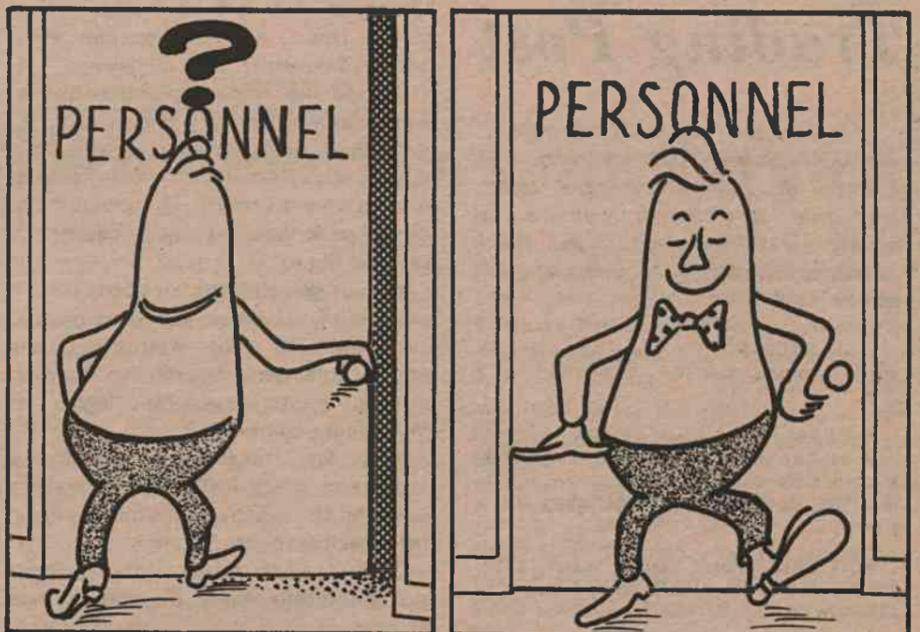
The county map will be divided into numbered zones.

Determine the number of the county zone in which you live and put that number in the designated blank on a Car Pool Information Form, copies of which will be distributed by payroll clerks today. They also are available at both the main campus traffic office and the medical center's Parking and Traffic Office, 350 Bell Building.

People who live outside of Durham County should put the name of their community in place of the county zone number on the form.

The completed forms are to be sent to the Traffic Office, 2010 Campus Drive, and people may go there to determine the names of people living in their area with whom they might form car pools.

Questions concerning car pools may be directed to Ext. 5773 at the medical center and Ext. 3348 on the main campus.



WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH THIS FELLOW?—Obviously in the first panel he has a question on his mind, but as he leaves the Personnel Office in the second panel, his question has been answered. Personnel Director Wayne Gooch and Personnel Assistant Bob New realize that personnel procedures, employee benefits and other subjects related to someone's employment at Duke aren't always easily understood. Beyond that, many people just aren't aware of their benefits. So Gooch and New have offered to provide a column on personnel activities to INTERCOM weekly. They hope the column will stimulate questions from employees. The column will be known as "Personal Paragraphs." (Artwork by Bob Blake)

Personnel Paragraphs

This is a new column for and about employees, faculty and staff at the medical center. The subject matter will cover a wide spectrum of personnel policies, benefits, federal and state regulations, payroll information, wage and salary data, and many other matters affecting employees at Duke.

Questions from readers are encouraged. If you have a question, send it to:

Personnel Paragraphs
Box 3017, Duke Medical Center

All inquiries must be signed, but you may request that your name not be used if your letter is published. All questions will be answered or referred to an appropriate source, but only questions of wide, general interest will be published. "Personnel Paragraphs" is your column, so let us hear from you.

SOCIAL SECURITY

For 1974, the base amount of annual salary subject to F.I.C.A. Tax is \$13,200. This is up from \$10,800 in 1973. The percentage of 5.85% will not change. On your W-2 form for 1973, some of you may notice that your wages subject to F.I.C.A. are less than wages subject to federal tax. This is because wages paid on sick leave are not subject to social security.

FEDERAL TAX FORMS

The Personnel Office, Room 1160 in the Yellow Zone, has a limited supply of Federal Tax forms for employee's use.

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