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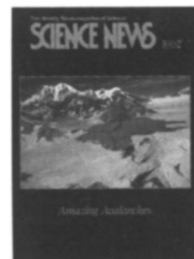
## This Week

- 132 Babies Add Up Basic Arithmetic Skills
- 132 Computer charts path of diffusing molecules
- 133 Old idea may solve climate conundrum
- 134 Studies smoke out the risk of cataracts
- 134 Magnetic coppers playing in the round
- 134 Which drug works best?
- 135 Wilderness corridors may not benefit all
- 135 Colliding positrons, polarized electrons

## Articles

### 136 When Mountains Fall

Cover: When a large earthquake hit eastern Alaska in 1979, it shook loose the side of this ridge in the St. Elias mountains, triggering a giant landslide that spread across the Cascade glacier in a thin, dark sheet. Geologists are trying to decipher what makes these large slides so mobile. (Photo: G. Plafker)



### 140 Magnetic Advantage

## Research Notes

- 143 Behavior
- 143 Environment

## Departments

- 130 Books
- 131 Letters

Science Service, a nonprofit corporation founded in 1921, gratefully accepts tax-deductible contributions and bequests to assist its efforts to increase the public understanding of science, with special emphasis on young people. More recently, it has included in its mission increasing scientific literacy among members of underrepresented groups. Through its Youth Program it administers the International Science and Engineering Fair, the Science Talent Search for the Westinghouse Science Scholarships, and publishes and distributes the *Directory of Student Science Training Programs for Precollege Students*.

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## Letters

### Health nuts?

What I found most interesting in "Heart risks: This is nutty" (SN: 7/25/92, p.52) was the relationship of the Seventh Day Adventists' diet to that of hunter-gatherer societies.

At the Koster Site on the Illinois River above St. Louis, anthropologists found that the Koster people lived a hunter-gatherer existence from around 12,000 to 1,000 years ago. Hickory nuts — an easily digestible, high-protein diet — were the society's major food. A study of the skeletal remains of the people indicated longevity. Their descendants, however, shifted to a corn diet and a farm culture. Their longevity declined and tooth decay became common.

Daniel B. Hurley  
Albuquerque, N.M.

On reading the article correlating nut-eating with a lower risk of heart attacks, I immediately thought of two SCIENCE NEWS articles I had saved regarding low magnesium intake and the increased risk of heart attacks ("New Misgivings About Low Magnesium," SN:

6/4/88, p.356; "Low-magnesium diet may clog heart arteries," SN: 4/7/90, p.214).

According to the *Handbook of the Nutritional Content of Foods*, published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, nuts (plus mature dry beans, wheat bran, wheat germ, and whole-grain buckwheat) are extremely good sources of magnesium. Could it be the magnesium in these foods that somehow alters blood lipids?

Judith Woodruff  
Chesterland, Ohio

In your article on the very beneficial heart-risk effects of regular inclusion of nuts in the diet, you cite Seventh Day Adventists as the control group due to the higher likelihood that they so use nuts. I did not receive Gary Fraser's questionnaire, but I am a Seventh Day Adventist and I do use unsalted whole nuts regularly in modest amounts.

Why? It's simple: We were told ahead of time. Seventh Day Adventists have been instructed by pioneer Ellen G. White in the specific matter of nuts in the diet, as well as in a host of other state-of-the-art dietary and health concerns.

That is how so very many Seventh Day Adventists have gained such an advantage in health and wholeness. Ellen G. White's writings covered a span of more than six decades, ending a short while before her death in 1914.

Gael W. Hoyt  
Yorba Linda, Calif.

With reference to "Heart risks: This is nutty," peanuts aren't nuts.

Roger M. Wernicke  
Pensacola, Fla.

You're quite right. The "nut" most commonly eaten by Adventists in Fraser's survey is actually a legume.

— J. Raloff

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All letters subject to editing.

AUGUST 29, 1992

131