

Past trips and future escapes

By Annette Green, The Fragrance Foundation

This is a fascinating moment in time—when we are all busily assessing the past and attempting to crystal gaze into the future. When the American Society of Perfumers held its first symposium in 1954, it is rather fascinating to note that according to every record I could find, not one fragrance was introduced on the American market. In 1979, 30 women's fragrances and 20 new men's scents debuted.

In the 26 years that have brought us to this remarkable state, we have witnessed a revolution in which American women have moved from using one fragrance once a week, on special occasions only, to wardrobes of fragrance to be enjoyed every day, the core of the change was the hippie revolution in the 60s that brought thousands of young people together for a summer of love in San Francisco. It was then that musk incense was burned to cover the smell of pot. Infatuation with the fragrance led to musk oil for the skin. The demand for musk reverberated through the hallowed halls of our industry. For the first time, a street trend affected the fragrance marketplace. The result, as we all know, has been a dramatic increase in the enjoyment of fragrance and the sense of smell.

As men and women became fragrance-conscious, something else was happening that was to have a tremendous impact on our business. Concerns about the environment, pollution, a feeling of inability to control the quality of our air and the purity of our waters combined to give a special urgency to understanding the role of the senses. Fragrance quickly became the focal point and the nose took its rightful place in the forefront of the battle to help us sniff out new standards for enjoying our inner and outer spaces.

As we approach the year 2000, dramatic changes are taking place at every level of society. Perhaps the most overwhelming change, which will effect all of us, is that we are leaving the industrial world that has molded our lives and speedily entering into the most information-oriented society that has ever existed.

The famous motivational researcher, Dr. Ernest Dichter, said back in 1951 that we are "dealing with an individual in conflict, occupied with understanding himself and his own motivation and the world within which he lives. The conflict going on in humans," Dr. Dichter went on to say, "is between individualism and the mass mind, pleasure and reality, rationality and irrationality, growth and immaturity, idealism and commercialism." Many of Dr. Dichter's propositions

are still with us. But as technology becomes an even more integral part of each of our lives, we will all be looking for the information that will allow us to improve the quality of our new life and expand its pleasures.

Behaviorists tell us we are moving away from the "me" toward the "we" generation. New limitations on energy and changing personal as well as national priorities, it appears, are going to consolidate our approach to the living experience and teach us how to perform in a more interrelated way.

In an article adapted from Alvin Toffler's new book, *The Third Wave*, the *New York Times* reported that tomorrow, as many people divide their lives between working part-time in big interdependent company organizations and working part-time for self and family in small autonomous units, we may well strike a new balance between objectivity and subjectivity in both sexes. Instead of fostering a male attitude and a female attitude, neither of them well balanced, the system may reward people who are healthily able to see the world from both perspectives.

On the subject of the sexes, current research tells us that while men still make their fragrance selections based on scent preference, women are influenced by "the best buy." The value of the fragrance experience has unquestionably been watered down with the giving of gifts that have no relationship at all to the wearing and enjoying of scent.

I think that what people should receive when they buy our fragrances, if nothing else, is new ideas to help them expand their total living experience. And that will not be as difficult as you might imagine. Let's talk about talking packages. Right this minute, speech is being added to many products that now sit silently on store shelves. Talking machines containing electronic voice boxes will tell people about the products they are interested in and how they can add to one's daily pleasures. Panasonic, for instance, is going to have a speaking microwave oven to advise women how to cook. Just think how effectively we can educate our consumers on the many roles of fragrance and how to enjoy each while they are shopping and when they bring their fragrances home. What's more, we will be able to keep our customers up to the minute on the latest trends that will affect their lives.

Predictions abound that most of us are going to become less materialistic, less inclined to acquire, for

acquisition's sake. If it is true, there can be no question that we will all seek, instead, greater fulfillment in the senses, and that definitely is where the fragrance industry comes in.

The government is planning to open sensory centers around the country, to help people solve their smell and taste problems. The first one is scheduled to open this year. I believe there will be sensory fulfillment centers in our industry's future, too. Men, women and children will step into environments bathed in fragrances, sounds, and sights that they won't observe over counters, but will instead become an intrinsic part of. They will be able to come to the center any hour of the day or night. On the floors above, quarters will be provided for sleeping, bathing, and experiencing new techniques in daydreaming, or communicating by satellite to counterparts around the world and in space. Aroma rooms complete with resident perfumers will be built to hold a varying number of people where one can have the sense of smell analyzed, tested, provoked, and detoxified.

Perhaps we should also be thinking about perfumery outposts and I mean *out-out* of the department stores, *out* of the drug store into exquisite incense box environments, much like the perfumeries we know in Paris. Many of these environments are springing up around the country, true—but the real impetus is yet to come from the perfume industry working hand in hand with the retail world.

The *New York Times* reported recently on an organization in France called French Contacts, which guides foreign business executives in the techniques of making money in Paris. Of special interest to us, an American lawyer not only has created a company in France to help a client who imported French wine, but he is working with French contacts on another plan: the setting up of a chain of shops across the U.S. to sell the best in French food, wines, clothes, and perfumes.

This might be an appropriate moment to comment on the articles which have recently appeared, with headlines proclaiming "The War of the Noses" and "The Fragrance War—France vs the U.S." Reality dictates that this subject should be closed, once and for all.

Fragrance has become a basic part of life, no matter where one lives or where it is made. Though editors may find division a good story, we should concentrate our international efforts on expanding the total, all-encompassing appreciation of the sense of smell through the most innovative fragrance concepts.

That is the great challenge to the perfumers of the future—to go beyond the forms that we are currently familiar with, and to provide the research and development that will result in new ways to experience fragrance.

The perfumer should be responsible for spending a substantial amount of time trying to anticipate the future, evaluating the opportunities and deciding how best to capitalize on them. Perfumers should not be

isolated entities, separated from the rest of us. They should keep abreast of the social and technological developments around the world that are evolving to excite and motivate people.

James A. Allen, chairman emeritus of Booz, Allen & Hamilton, management consultants, spoke recently at a Northwestern University class reunion. He reviewed the forecasts for the next 50 years of 20 top futurists. One of the most important trends, which he noted, was that the world population will become highly-civilized but with a strong desire for stability. Virtually everybody, he reported, will be in the leisure class and most labor will be accomplished by electronic machinery. Life expectancy will rise to nearly 100. And people will not be as concerned about aging as about learning the techniques for keeping all the senses at peak performance. If these forecasts do, indeed, turn out to be true, certainly the role of the senses and therefore fragrance will become increasingly important.

Fragrance suppliers will have educational programs that allow marketers to spend specified periods of time interrelating with the creators of the fragrances. It will no longer be a case of a company deciding that it would like the perfumer to create a lovely floral blend to appeal to the sophisticated consumer.

Everybody is going to be sophisticated. The question at hand is how to appeal to the very complex sensory systems that are going to evolve, and that are going to demand products that appeal specifically to the senses.

We must not be afraid of the creative mind. Ron Burkhardt, an advertising copywriter in Atlanta, recently wrote in an article for *Advertising Age*, "We must provide the framework for an explosion of thought." He also pinpointed the truism that the right concept, fully-developed, can reach inside a person, motivate and change thinking by redefining old ideas. He was talking about advertising, but I feel that his thoughts are just as relevant to creating and marketing a fragrance.

If one thing is obvious, it is that the perfumer must be brought into the forefront of decision making. I believe we will see the time when companies that market products will insist upon having a perfumer take part in the marketing strategy, who will guide in the development of new products, whether they are to be used in the environment, or through computer communication.

Business Week recently devoted its 50th Anniversary issue to the impact of the computer on the way we will live, work, and buy in the future. No question about it, the home-based computer will be a basic part of all of our lives. People will make their decisions with the push of a button.

Our industry has spent a great deal of time and money putting computers and various other devices on the counter, to tell women how to select makeup and skin care treatment products. But very little has been done about putting any kind of technical equipment at the consumer's disposal that explains how

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fragrance works on the skin, how to select a scent, how diet, aging, dry skin, oily skin, and the weather all influence the way we respond to and enjoy fragrance. In the society we are about to enter, this kind of information will be absolutely essential if we are going to expect people to accept fragrances as a meaningful part of their lives.

In a new book, *Breakthroughs: Astonishing Advantages in your Lifetime in Medicine, Science and Technology*, by Charles Panati, the author presents us with an endless variety of fascinating possibilities. For instance, a miniaturized memory bank will fit inside a tooth and be wired to the brain to help us remember everything from the name of the perfume we bought 20 years ago to the fragrance our computer is programmed to spray in the living room tonight. Nasal sprays are being developed right now to stimulate our memories by bringing back and retaining carbon copies of the chemistry in our brains. Such advances offer the fragrance industry new opportunities to communicate with the right side of the brain.

In the current issue of *Business Tomorrow*, a bimonthly newsletter published by the World Future Society, characteristics that are going to be important in 1990 to the men and women who will be our perfumers and marketing executives, are described as quite different from those of today.

For the first time, the creative forces to be found in the right side of the brain will be the most influential. To be a visionary, a futurist, highly creative, concerned about the environment, eager to innovate—these are the qualities that will mean success. Built into this report is the dominance of the senses.

In the future, it is expected that technology at all levels will reveal in minutest detail individual response to fragrance. We will be able to “see” fragrance warming on our skin and detect the miracle of chemical reactions.

Years ago, the famous producer, Mike Todd, introduced “Smell-a-Vision” in theaters across the country. Though it wasn’t perfected at the time, methods will surely be devised to transmit scent as part of the techniques, including the remarkable laser beam, which are now being explored—to expand our enjoyment of the arts in and out of the home.

By the way, 54% of the population considers art, in all its forms, essential to maintaining the quality of life. It has certainly been proven that a society perpetuates what it supports. Well, our industry has long maintained that fragrance is one of the world’s great arts. I believe that is so. Yet, it is one thing to claim to be a part of the artistic community, but quite another to make that claim credible.

We should seek to contribute to and learn from

every segment of the art world: music, theater, painting, sculpture, design. Our mutual goals should encourage us to have a continuing and interlocking dialogue. We can and must learn from each other, and work together to devise marvelous new art forms to appeal to all the senses.

We are each responsible for helping to create the sensory world of tomorrow: perfumers, packagers, marketers, researchers, artists, communicators—all of us.

I know you join me in anticipation of this glorious new adventure that, for the first time in modern history, will depend upon the appreciation of the creative side of our natures. It will allow us to escape from the mundane into a fully realized realm of shared awareness, where pleasures will be heightened beyond imagination by the Merlins of perfumery who have shared their secrets and intoxicated our senses from generation to generation.

Robert H. Miller is President—Charles of the Ritz International. Mr. Miller is a graduate of Rutgers University and a fellow New Jerseyman. Mr. Miller is recognized as one of the key persons responsible for the development and launch of Yves St. Laurent's fragrance Opium. He will discuss the businessman's perspective on the evolution of the worldwide cosmetic and fragrance industry in the decade ahead.