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Chatting . . .

with M. H. B.

● WHILE EXCAVATING for a bridge out near Speyside, a week ago Friday, Bill Hamilton's Construction men dug up quite a surprise . . . a family of mud-puppies, or water dogs. These almost prehistoric looking creatures were living in the bed of a small creek and in spite of the fact that Eastern Canada and United States are their natural habitat, we've never heard of them before, have you?

What the mud puppy actually resembles, is a big lizard. The resemblance to a puppy, or dog, begins and ends with their gills. They are equally at home on-land or in the water, being supplied with a set of external gills located at the back of their head on either side, as well as internal lungs. These gills are long and feathery-looking, and hang down like the ears of a spaniel. They are quite fascinating to watch as they expand and contract. Oh yes, we almost forgot—mud-puppies have something else in common with dogs—four short legs . . .

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● TO BECOME A LITTLE scientific for a moment, the encyclopedia lists a mud-puppy as a great salamander of the primitive order of amphibians called "Urodeles"—Got that?—To put it more simply, the creature is about 18" long, its wrinkled skin is a dark gray colour with light gray blotches, and it has a fairly long tail flattened vertically. If it weren't for its head and face, which rather resemble a frog (except that its eyes are small and beady) the mud puppy looks like a small alligator . . .

A little research on the subject yields the information that these unusual animals have a life-span of about twenty-three years after they hatch from their eggs. They stay under water most of the time although their legs and internal lungs enable them to scurry about on land if they wish.

● AS WE MENTIONED before, there was a whole family of mud-puppies near Sepaside and Bill Hamilton gave one to town foreman Ernie Hyde to show to his family. The Hyde boys took it to school in a big pail, so the students could have an opportunity to study the somewhat rare specimen. Not knowing exactly what diet mud-puppies prefer, when we last heard, it was thriving on commercially prepared fish-food. We imagine by this time, it has been returned to a small stream similar to the one where it originated, because its original home has since been bulldozed out. We only hope it was placed in a fairly inaccessible creek . . . Imagine stepping onto the back of one of those creatures when wading in a stream . . . Although harmless as far as we know, their appearance is odd enough to half scare you to death.



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● WE RECEIVED a very nice letter from Kathy Ankersmit last week, written shortly after she had arrived in Calgary. Since coming out from Holland two years ago, Kathy had been living with her relatives, Mr. and Mrs. L. DeVries on their lovely farm. A member of the staff of the local Bank of Commerce for over a year, she has now transferred to the bank branch at Calgary.

Kathy likes to travel. Before coming to Canada, she lived and worked in Switzerland, Norway and England, in addition of course to her native Netherlands. At several of the gatherings to welcome New Canadians, Kathy has acted as interpreter, since she is able to speak French, German and Norwegian as well as Dutch and English. We imagine these abilities will be quite an asset in the bank at Calgary where a good many new Canadians have settled. At any rate, we thought you might be interested in reading parts of her letter to us. It was quite an adventure to set out alone to travel all those hundreds and hundreds of miles, in a very-recently acquired little English car. Here are a few excerpts:

● "I ENJOYED the trip out here very much. At first I did not have much confidence in my driving, because I had only owned

that car for one month and I had never driven more than about 30 miles at a time. I liked the part north of Huntsville very much. When I came to North Bay, the first day I got myself a room in a hotel and slept for a while, then I went down town and found out that the CPR boat across Lake Superior was leaving Sault Ste-Marie at nine the next morning. I took off for the Sault that same evening and arrived there around 5 in the morning. I enjoyed the boat trip very much. There were only five passengers and the captain asked us up to the bridge and showed us how they run the boat. There is lots of traffic on the Lakes.

Early Monday morning we docked in Fort William and I started out with more confidence then. The car broke down in Wabagoon, Ont., that is not far from Dryden. The ballbearing in the distributor had gone on the blink. Of course luck was with me, because the car quit on me right in front of a garage.

It was fixed in about three hours and off I went again to Kenora. The road to Kenora is not very good as far as pavement is concerned, but for beauty it is unsurpassed. I drove there against the sunset and the soft light made the trees look so beautiful. I am quite partial to evergreens and nature in general so you can imagine how I enjoyed that ride.

● FROM KENORA I drove in one day to Brandon, Man., then to Saskatoon in one day and I stayed there with a friend of mine whom I had met three years ago in Switzerland. She is a Canadian nurse and travelled through Europe. That is how we met. We had a grand time going over our memories of Switzerland.

On Saturday, May 21 I drove from Saskatoon to Calgary and arrived there late at night. I enjoyed driving through the prairies and I think that Saskatoon and Winnipeg are two nice cities. I did not care much for Regina.

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● WHAT I LIKE ABOUT Calgary is the cleanliness and the beautiful modern business buildings. I did not have a very high opinion about Canadian architecture, but over here they sure know how to make a city look attractive. The only beautiful building that I can think of in the east is the General Electric plant just outside Guelph. That is a jewel of a factory, I think.

A week ago last Sunday I drove with two girls of the Y up to Banff. Did I ever enjoy that day. It was nice sunny weather and it was wonderful to be back in the mountains.

"I miss the nice friendly atmosphere of Georgetown."
 And your many friends here miss you too, Kathy . . .

● CONTINUING WITH OUR NEW family names, here are some of the residents of Mary St. in the Cloverdale Height subdivision—Mr. and Mrs. K. E. McQueen; Mr. and Mrs. Jack Cheetham; Mr. and Mrs. Fred W. Watts; Mr. and Mrs. Howard J. Williams; Mr. and Mrs. Corcoran; Mr. and Mrs. Sullivan; and Mr. and Mrs. James A. Goudy.

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