

Is That So?

By OLGA BURNS

All axolotls are the larval form of a land salamander, but some turn into salamanders and others don't—a condition that has resulted in considerable confusion.

Until a discovery made in Paris back in 1865, the attitude toward axolotls was rela-



IS THAT SO!

tively simple. It was generally felt that the axolotl, which Mexicans consider an excellent dish when boiled or roasted and served with pep-

pers, didn't turn into a salamander. However, when an observer in the Jardin des Plantes noticed that four young axolotls of a litter, but not all, shed their external gills and tail fringes to become adult salamanders, the attitude toward axolotls changed. A similar event took place in Germany a little later, and the scientists of the day were presented with an enigma.

If an axolotl could become a salamander in France or Germany, why not in Mexico? Was it because of a difference in altitude, or merely because Axolotls in Mexico hadn't been observed closely enough?

During the next 75 years scientists found out plenty about the axolotls of Central Mexican lakes and streams, but the information served

more to compound the mystery than clarify it. While all axolotls were larval forms of the tiger salamander, there were startling differences among them.

Axolotls in lakes south of Mexico City wouldn't become salamanders in their native waters, but some would in aquariums. Those of Lake Patcuaro wouldn't under any conditions. Those in some mountain streams would make the change regularly and breed afterwards. Those in other streams would make the change, but some of them would breed while still in the axolotl state.

Some Isolated
Apparently the best explanation for these differences is that the axolotls in some waters have been isolated from those in others for thousands of years. The isolation probably resulted from lava flows due to the volcanic activity in the area. Over the centuries such isolation would

result in modifications of the local stock, but these modifications were arrested as the isolating barriers were broken down or circumvented in one way or another. Whirlwinds, for example, have often resulted in the transfer of life forms from one body of water to another.

As for the use of the word axolotl, it will probably not be restricted to the nontransforming type of Lake Patcuaro as some have wished. Most likely, people will continue to use it to describe the larval stage of the tiger salamander just as the Aztecs did who invented the name.

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Sorry, I simply cannot answer your many friendly letters individually, but I will be glad to answer letters of general interest, c/o Medford Mail Tribune, Box 1069, San Francisco, Calif.

About 400,000 More Due For Social Security Money

Editor's note: Following is the second of two dispatches telling about forthcoming changes in the Social Security law.

By LOUIS CASSELS
Washington—(UPI)—There are about 400,000 people in the U.S. who are newly eligible for Social Security payments. The Social Security Administration is trying to locate them to advise them of their rights. They won't get the money unless they file claims. You, or someone you know, may be one of them.

Their right to benefits stems from a series of amendments to the Social Security law which Congress enacted at its recent session. Here are the principal groups affected: **Disabled Workers and Families**

Since 1957, disabled workers who are covered by the Old Age and Survivors Insurance (OASI) program have been able to collect, begin-

ning at age 50, the same monthly benefits they would have gotten had they retired at age 65. About 200,000 disabled workers are drawing these benefits.

Now, for the first time, their dependents also are eligible for benefits—on the same basis as dependents of retired workers. There are about 180,000 of them. But they must file applications at local social security offices.

Also, thousands of disabled workers who were previously turned down are now eligible for insurance benefits. The law used to contain two requirements for eligibility. First, the worker needed to have Social Security credit for at least five out of the ten years before he became disabled. And second he had to show that he had been working at a job covered by Social Security for at least one and a half out of the last three years before he became disabled.

The second of these requirements has been abolished. Any disabled worker who was turned down be-

cause of it should immediately file a new application.

Aged Parents
The new legislation liberalizes the conditions under which survivors' benefits are payable to parents who were dependent on a worker covered by Social Security. Previously, dependent parents were not eligible for benefits if the deceased worker also was survived by a spouse or child. Now dependent parents who survive an insured worker are entitled to benefits regardless of whether other members of the worker's family are drawing survivor's checks.

There are about 60,000 such dependent parents. Social Security is having a very hard time locating them. They must file applications to get their checks.

Adopted Children
Under the old law, a child must have been adopted at least three years before an insured worker died in order to be counted in figuring the family's survivor's benefits. That restriction has now been eliminated. An adopted child

counts like any other child, regardless of the time of adoption.

Disabled Children
In the past, disabled children over 18 years of age qualified for benefits as dependents only if it was shown they had been receiving at least half of their support from a retired or deceased parent who was covered by Social Security insurance. Now disabled children over 18 count the same as children under 18 in computing dependent benefits, without any

necessity of showing that they got half their support from the insured parent.

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