



**PRESIDENT COMPLIMENTED** - Martin B. McKneally, national commander of the American Legion, pays a courtesy call on President Eisenhower at Washington, D.C. He said he complimented the President on the "wonderful image of America he has presented" in his trips to foreign countries. McKneally is an attorney in Newburgh, N. Y. (UPI Telephoto)



**Small Worlds Around Us**

By Lynn M. Watkins

**Opossum Is Somewhat Of Scientific Dilemma**

"Honey, I know babies are always supposed to be very small when they are born, but this is ridiculous," would certainly be the disgusted observation papa opossum would make if he were around when his children first enter this world.

He is not alone in his bewilderment for the embryology of this common animal of the marsupial family has almost given science itself a headache and posed questions to which there is no easy or simple explanation.

**Born Too Soon**

Baby opossums probably are born too soon. They are premature and immature, blind, naked, and hairless. They are so small they resemble insects more than they do warm-blooded, air-breathing mammals. Each is about the size of a honey-bee and weighs half as much. About 16 of them could be placed in an ordinary teaspoon.

And from this very poor beginning, each opossum may develop into an animal weighing 10 or 12 pounds and have a temper like a "lion with a toothache." Immediately the babies are born, they crawl instinctively into the mother's abdominal pouch through a flap in the skin, on the underside of the parent's body. Here they nurse and remain for six or seven weeks.

Eventually they crawl out but cling close to the mother's fur and up onto her back. Here they ride along for a time, acquainting themselves with opossum-ways and adjusting their bodies to climatic conditions. If the going gets a little rough, the parent bends her bare scaly tail over her back like a handrail. The youngsters wrap their prehensile tails around hers, and like strap-hangers, ride out the rough road or jouncing passage through the brush or over the pinelands. During these rides, the mother's tail usually lifts and the young one's rear feet are lifted up, but they hang on, gripping the mother's fur with their front paws.

The opossum is too slow-witted or stupid actually to know that their kind is a remarkable and distinctive order of animals, known as the "pouched mammals," of which the kangaroo is a familiar type. The opossum is the only mammal on the American continent that is a member of the marsupial order.

The opossum is remarkable in many ways. It has a prehensile tail and grasping hind feet like a monkey's. Some have developed a trick to escape an enemy by "playing dead." This seems to be a state of shock or perhaps a condition similar to a "dead faint."

Peculiar that an opossum, full grown, blundering along in its aimless manner, should be somewhat of a scientific dilemma; a creature actually balanced on a biological teeter-totter. Yes, if papa opossum were there when the babies are born, he could aptly quote, Grover Cleveland when he said, "It is a condition which confronts us - not a theory."

**Motion Picture Presidents Accused**

Hollywood-078-The Screen Actors Guild Friday accused "ever-absent" presidents of major motion picture companies for delaying settlement of the 26-day actors' strike.

**EX-COMMANDER DIES**

Richmond, Va. (UPI) - Rear Adm. Herbert Watson Taylor, 62, World War II commander of the Aircraft carriers Coral Sea and Cowpens, died Thursday. Taylor's last command was the naval air station at Anacosta, Md. He retired in 1951.

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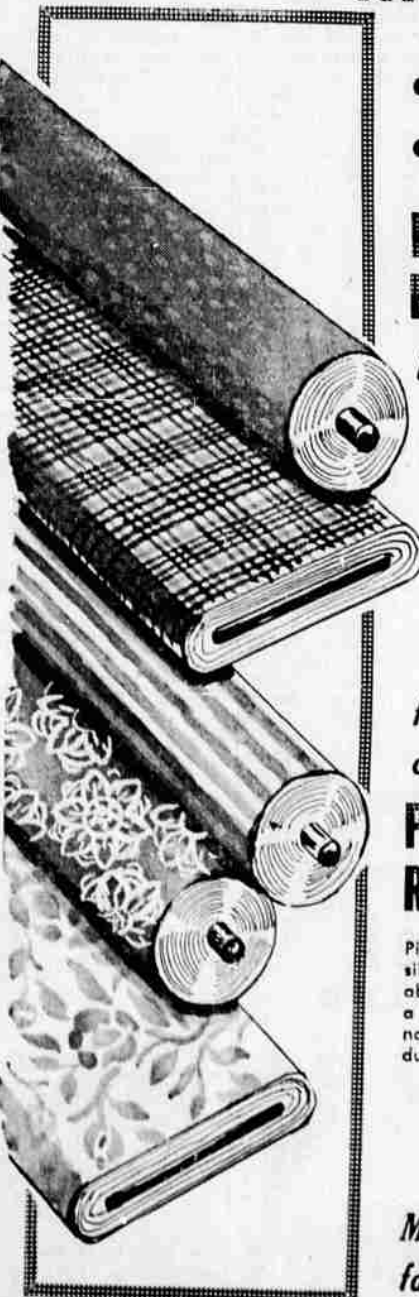
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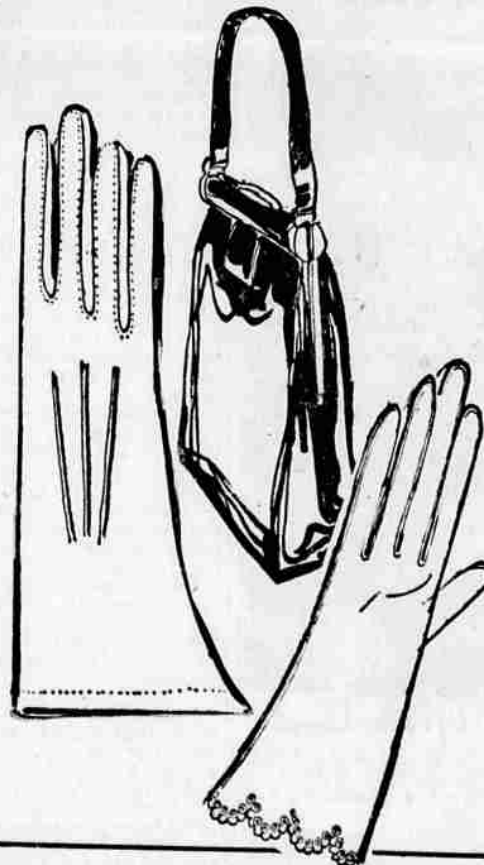
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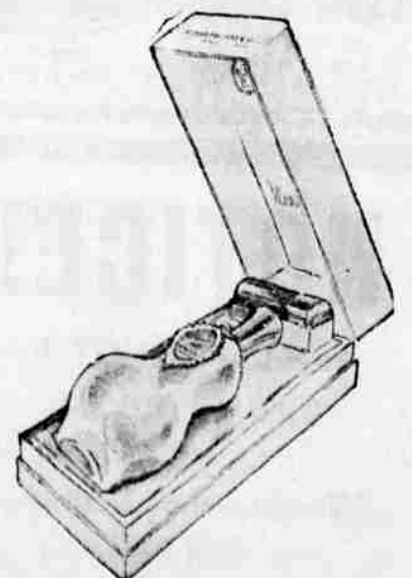
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