

DorleLettersE L0001 (English)

Mont Laurier, July 12, '55

Dear Luti, Half the vacation is already over. It was just wonderful. Every day we spent 2-3 hours in the water, that is, on the air mattress. We don't do any cooking; we eat cucumbers, canned food with vinegar & oil, and bread with it, and oranges and dried apricots. Sleeping in the car works great. We do it like this: towards evening, we wash up and change at a lake, and when it gets dark, Inge slips into the sleeping bag in the back and we drive to the next town, where we then sleep either by the first houses or at a gas station. Early in the morning at 5 o'clock, I crawl out of my sleeping bag and drive off before the people arrive; Inge is usually still sleeping in the back. At the next lake, we wash up and have breakfast, and then we drive again for a bit until we're ready for a swim at noon. We haven't planned our route at all, which is the best part. After we left Montreal, we went along the river to Quebec. Quebec is a wonderful, unique American city with city walls. From Quebec, we headed north, still along the St. Lawrence River, but sometimes the road went into the mountains, meaning it's about 1000 meters high and resembles the Black Forest, except that the only road that goes through it is just a path, like maybe the old road to Meinburg. It was constantly up and down, uphill in 1st gear, downhill in 2nd gear, it was that steep. And then every 2 miles, a magnificent lake. We spent the night in St. Simeon; it was freezing cold there. The river is already salty there. Something nice happened to us there, too. At night, we always locked the car. With the Volkswagen, you can open it from the inside, but not from the outside. In the morning, we locked ourselves out and couldn't get the doors open; the keys were in the dashboard. By chance, the "hood" in the front was open, where the tools are. So I thought I could probably do what the photo thieves in Toronto did. I bent a screwdriver and in 1/4 of a minute, the window was broken open. That was our good fortune, because we were only in our swimsuits in the considerable cold at 5 in the morning, and of course there are no car repair shops up there anymore. Then came a wonderful stretch, mountains and lakes, all about 1000 meters high, forest and very isolated houses. Once, a big brown bear nearly crossed our path. He was sitting in the grass by the roadside, and as we drove by, he immediately turned around and trotted to the forest. A pity we couldn't photograph him. In Chicoutimi, we even went to the movies; we saw the same film as on my birthday, "Cinderella." There's a lot of timber industry there; the rivers are full of logs, so many, I have never seen anything like it. We took a lot of pictures, I'll send some of them sometime. The next day, we went through Laurentide Park, which is a provincial park of 4000 square miles and with 1600 lakes. You're not allowed to hunt there, but people fish for salmon up to 2 meters long and a type of trout. But it's hard to stay there for long and live, because everything to the left and right of the road is such a primeval forest that you can't go two meters into it. But we went swimming anyway. The road is simply carved into the forest; to the left and right, the trees are still lying there. Once we had to stop when two cow moose ran across the road. And once we saw two little bear cubs playing. Before the park, you are registered, time and date, and at the exit, you are checked to see if you have been hunting. That was a magnificent tour. Then we went across the Laurentians to Shawinigan Falls and St. Jerome. From there, we drove up the highway into the High Laurentians, again over 1000 meters high, but not as wild, more like the Allgäu, and with

real Allgäu-style houses, as many Germans and Swiss live there. And there we happened to pass by "Santa Claus Village." It is so nice and tasteful. Four Montreal businessmen built it. Of course, they make money from it, but the complex cost them 200,000 dollars. It is a large hill with about 7-8 colorful witch's cottages, each with something different inside. In one, Native American handicrafts are sold, in one only postcards, in another you can—in a chapel is the Christmas nativity scene and you can ring the bell and make a wish. And in one little house is Santa Claus with his sleigh and he talks to the children and gives them lollipops. He spoke German with us and told us all about the place. In the garden and in the houses, goats and llamas and young bear cubs run around, all very tame.

which are hardly around anymore, but are beautiful to look at. The chapels are lined with glass bottles that are stuck in the walls.