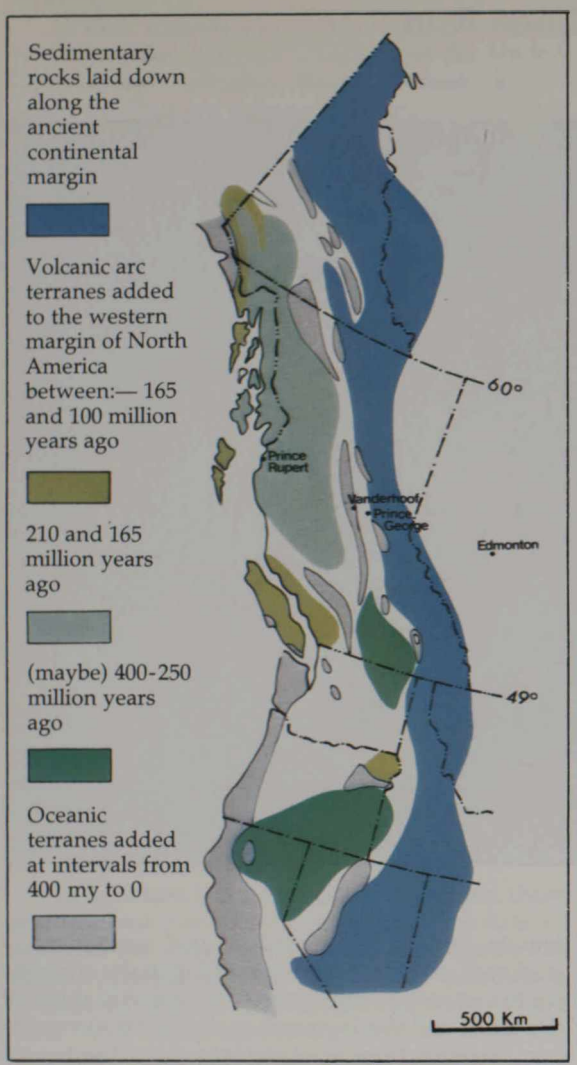

The geographic base of western North America. Driving from Edmonton to Prince Rupert, B.C., you would cross the ancient continental margin near Prince George, a sliver of ancestral Pacific Ocean near Vanderhoof and on to a fragment that was probably originally located far to the south of its present position.

other side had been formed 250 million years later, some 1,000 miles to the west.

It became increasingly clear that the Pacific continental shelf and much of the West Coast growth had resulted from land movements from the south, and that the process was still going on.

Baja California and the narrow slice of California west of the San Andreas fault, for example, are sliding northward at the rate of about two inches a year. In time Los Angeles will be a suburb of San Francisco. Fifty million years from now it will have worked its way up to Alaska.

Geologists in Canada, the United States and Mexico are now putting together huge colour maps which will show the origins of all the land west of the Rockies, from Alaska to Guatemala. Japan will map its own coasts, and other countries in the western Pacific may do the same.

The Return of the Sea Otter

The sea otter, a clever, endearing mammal with a walrus (or sea otter) mustache, has been more or less extinct along the British Columbia coast for a hundred years.

They returned some ten years ago and they seem to be thriving.

The otter is one of the few mammals—with man, the chimpanzee and the gorilla—that use tools. They feed while floating on their backs, using stones to crack mussels. They have other distinctive features including a pocket—a loose fold of skin across the front and under the armpits—in which they can carry twenty-five sea urchins or clams until they are ready to eat them.

They also have what is considered the finest fur in the world, so silky and thick that it doesn't seem real. They were once abundant from Japan to Mexico, but their pelts brought as much as $2,000 each and they were hunted almost to extermination in the eighteenth century.

In 1911 Canada, Russia, Japan and the United States agreed to protect them, but at that point only a few were left, most of them in the Aleutians.

By 1965 the population had increased to an estimated 32,000—most still in the Aleutians but some 5,000 in Russian waters and 600 off Monterey, California. After many failures, Karl Kenyon of the U.S. Bureau of Sports Fisheries and Wildlife succeeded in moving seven to St. Paul in the Pribilof Islands off Alaska in 1959, and some 400 more were transplanted in the next ten years.

In 1966 Ian MacAskie and Don Blood made arrangements for Alaska to give forty sea otters to British Columbia.

In 1969 the first batch was carried successfully to Checleset Bay on the northwest coast of Vancouver Island, and more followed in 1970 and 1972.

A census in 1977 counted fifty-five at Checleset Bay on the northwest coast of Vancouver Island and fifteen at Bajo Reef, forty-five miles away.