

## Mt. Queen Bess

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THE Coast Range lured me once again in 1942. In a description of the view from Mt. Razorback in 1932, I had written: "To the S. Bishop's Peak 10,712 ft., a prominent feature in his 1922 photograph of Waddington and Tiedemann from Good Hope, stood out from this angle like a tiny Matterhorn, easily the prize peak between the Homathko and Southgate Rivers."<sup>1</sup> Capt. R. P. Bishop, who in his spare time from survey work is a student of the Elizabethan navigators, arranged subsequently to have this fine peak officially named Mt. Queen Bess. It stands about 13 miles south of the S. end of Tatlayoko Lake at the E. edge of the great Homathko snowfields which lie between it and the head of Bute Inlet (29 miles to the S. W.), and about 15 miles W. of Chilko Lake,

Early in June the Mundays and I began casually enquiring about our respective plans, if any, for the summer. Negotiations first by ordinary mail, then airmail, then frantic telegraphing, resulted in my arrival at Ashcroft from the E. at 1.25 A.M. on July 3rd, and an hour later the Mundays' familiar voices sounded in the hall of the hotel where the lingering heat of the day (it had been 103°) made sleep elusive. By noon the I. T. stage had gotten us over the Cariboo road to Williams Lake. Thence the Chilcotin stage on its regular mail run took us by evening of the 4th to Ken Moore's ranch at the N. end of Tatlayoko Lake. Here a day was spent while Moore's daughter Isabel and her partner, Jerry Lovelle, brought in some horses from the range.

Bright and early on the 6th Ken drove us with his tractor and trailer to the lake. Here a large rowboat, propelled by an out-board motor (temperamental, on this its first run of the season, until some offending dirt was taken from the feed pipe screen), took us down the lake in two and a half hours against a fresh southerly breeze, and splashing waves. Harry Haines and Isabel Moore brought the horses by trail and met us at the mining company's cabin on Matthews Creek, 4 miles beyond the S. end of the

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<sup>1</sup> C. A. J. xxi (1932), 109.

lake, late the same afternoon. From a bluff above the Homathko as it leaves the lake, Mt. Razorback was visible. After supper we tried unsuccessfully to recommission a cable car, once used by the miners to cross Matthews Creek (also known as Hostetuko).

The ford went better at lower water with the horses in the morning, and we then traveled down the left (S.) side of the Homathko Valley until stopped by a huge rock slide just above Stonsayako Creek, where we camped at 2600 ft. Next morning was spent getting the horses several hundred feet up a steep scree slope to higher ground, whence we struck S. over fairly rough country. By noon of the day after, the going became so difficult that we unpacked the horses in a jackpine thicket, cut out a few trees to enable them to turn around, said good-by to Ken and Isabel and shouldered packs, caching some food for later relays.

It took five more days of reconnaissance, trail cutting, relaying, struggling up and down and generally having a good workout, to establish camp a mile below the glacier at the head of Stonsayako Creek, on July 13th. Not the least interesting thing seen was the re-excavating by the creek of a section of forest, overwhelmed and buried 20 feet deep in boulders and glacial gravel at some earlier period. Rugged unnamed peaks towered more than 5000 ft. on either side of this valley. Base camp (4450 ft.) was set up in a narrow strip of timber on the E. side of the valley. Deer were numerous. Porcupines had occasionally to be chased away and once a small black bear. We saw no grizzlies on this trip. The Mundays and I had seen enough of them in previous years.

The next item on the program was to find our objective. Three days of rain consumed one-third of our allotted time, futilely. On the 17th we climbed above camp in clearing weather to 7200 ft., but saw no signs of Mt. Queen Bess. Getting on to the glacier next morning, which we had done once before the rain, was not entirely amusing. The tongue (4950 ft.) has retreated rapidly of late, leaving steep ice slabs at the side, partly buried and overhung by boulders. The creek issues from a huge cavern, flanked by vertical ice cliffs. We climbed up a gravel finger between exposed lateral ice gullies. Step cutting across the gullies was made hazardous by a constant bombardment of everything from fine gravel to boulders weighing tons. Despite all precautions we had several rather narrow escapes. This was the last pleasant part of the whole approach of the

mountain. The glacier itself went easily, with short pitches of step cutting here and there. At 6900 ft., above the second terrace, we came out onto the main icefield. The Queen was still invisible. We made some random guesses. Don and I were sure it must be at the right of the head of the glacier, as we looked up the valley. Phyl suddenly shouted: "There it is," as a vertical face, overhung by a huge névé bulge above a snow arête came into sight on our left. She was outvoted two to one. She was right! The E. face is sheer for perhaps 3000 ft. Toward us, foreshortened, ran a rock ridge which none of us felt impelled to try. By 12.30 P.M. we had reached the head of the snowfield and were looking S.W. over a deep cross valley to the rim of the Homathko snowfield beyond. Here we saw Mt. Queen Bess side on, and discussed, or rather argued, routes. The only thing we entirely agreed on was that the climb must be postponed to another day. This was the 18th.

On the 20th we returned to the attack. Where one fluffy cloud had hung on a pass before, we now had the thrill of the trip, as the whole Waddington-Teidemann massif burst into view, scarcely 30 miles away. None of us, and in fact no one at all, had seen it from this angle, from 8000 ft. before. We were looking straight up Tiedemann Glacier, traversed by the Neave-Second party in 1934 on their courageous but unsuccessful attempt to make the first ascent of the summit tower. Wiessner and House had finally done it from Franklin Glacier in 1936. As we looked, Don and Phyl began to worry about a party of two young Beckey brothers and an older companion from Seattle who had come to them just before their departure from Vancouver, for information. Little did we realize that Fred and Helmy Beckey, both under twenty, would make the second ascent of Waddington's formidable summit 17 days later.

Our actual climb, though not difficult, required considerable caution in places. The steepening snowfield gradually merged into three snow gullies, broad at the bottom, but narrowing and separated by flattish rock ribs. Recent avalanches had swept the two larger gullies clean, almost down to the underlying ice. We kicked steps up the left gully, crossed over into the middle gully, kicked up it, cutting through to ice here and there. Had there been no avalanches a day or two previously the whole route would have been potentially dangerous. As it was the remaining com-

pacted snow was seldom more than a few inches deep, and therefore mostly safe, barring human failings. The angle was nowhere more than  $50^{\circ}$ . The upper 300 ft. of the left branch of the central gully was well broken rock. We came out into the crest of the main ridge at 2.30 P.M. and peered cautiously over the vertical E. face. The last few hundred feet lay along an easy snow arête in hot sun, and at 4.10 P.M. we came to the highest point, the top of the great névé mass, which fell away precipitously into space in every direction except along the arête up which we had come.

A nearly perfect day with slight haze gave practically unlimited vision in every direction. We three shook hands and wondered if this would be our last good climb in the Coast Range together. The view was magnificent. To the E., the relatively dry Mts. Tatlow and Taseko, both over 10,000 ft., were beyond Chilko Lake which was hidden in its own deep trench. Directly S. were Mts. Raleigh and Gilbert, and sweeping to the S. and W. the great rolling, white expanse of the Homathko snowfields, covering perhaps 400-500 square miles, at an average altitude of 8000-9000 ft. Mt. Grenville, climbed by the Mundays and Miss Prescott the previous year, and the white capped block of Bute Mountain rose conspicuously to the S.W. Slightly N. of W. the magnificent white mass of Mt. Waddington and its associates and satellites, and to the right again the bold dark pyramid of Mt. Monarch, 80 miles away. Mt. Reliance, just E. of the Homathko forks rose to almost 10,500 ft. Two small lakes nestled in the dark woods, one on either side of Tiedemann Glacier tongue, glistening in the afternoon sun. The trench of the Homathko, the river itself invisible, cut a dark swathe in the otherwise brilliant shimmer, extending into the deep gash of Bute Inlet. This was one of those great views which climbers work so hard to see. We were thrilled and deeply satisfied. After 40 minutes of enjoyment and busy photographing and taking of angles and notes, we prepared to leave.

The descent was not too pleasant in softening snow and ice, often wet in the direct rays of the afternoon sun. Lower down we wallowed knee deep, stopped for a bite to eat at sunset, and swung down the glacier. On our left, a brilliant sunset, and then ahead thunder clouds and heat lightning over the plateau. Darkness found us still a mile up the glacier. With miner's lamp in one hand, Don cut steps with the other, at two points, where my steps



of the early morning had melted out. The ice gully at the tongue provided a sensational ten minutes as rocks and boulders bounced down several times nearby, throwing off sparks, as we cut our way off the ice. Tired, and stumbling on the rough footing, we came to camp at 3 A.M., exactly 24 hours from the start. After two days' rest, we took three days for the return to Moore's ranch. The only incident of the bus ride out was the killing of a small cougar cub (mountain lion) on the road between Fraser River and Williams Lake. None of us had ever seen one. The driver took it to the game warden to claim the substantial bounty offered. They kill many deer and sometimes cattle.

At Ashcroft a cloudburst the day before had washed gravel out of a "dry" gully, burying the C. P. R. tracks 3 feet deep, a few hundred feet W. of the station. The ordinary annual precipitation at Ashcroft is about 8 inches.