

## Climbing and Skiing in the Waddington Area

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A LONG cherished desire to climb in the B. C. Coast Range was realized when on July 1st, 1942, Helmy Beckey (my brother) and I<sup>1</sup> of the Seattle Mountaineers began backpacking up the Franklin River Valley near the head of Knight Inlet. Long behind now seemed the months of preparation, conditioning climbs, and first ascents made in the Northern Cascades of Washington in June. A worthwhile day was spent in Vancouver packing our food supplies in man-day bags. Following that we visited the Mundays, who so ably pioneered this section of the Coast Mountains. The *S. S. Venture* of the Union Steamship Co. brought us to Glendale Cove on Knight Inlet where J. R. Stanton took us aboard his gas boat for the voyage to the Franklin River. The moonlight cruise up the fjord-like inlet was an unforgettable memory, and ended all too soon.

We started with high hopes and heavy loads along the glacial waters of the Franklin. The meager trail was well overgrown by all types of coastal vegetation and besides that well crossed by windfalls. The joys of mountaineering certainly aren't at their climax at such times. Most of the first week was spent relaying loads to Last Valley Camp, about 7 miles from tidewater. It was during this time that the third member of our party became ill and had to return home. This greatly decreased the margin of safety, as well as necessitating revision of food and equipment.

Rain had been falling during the latter part of the week and poor weather continued to prevail as we began relaying loads toward Icefall Point up the Franklin Glacier. Judging by photos

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<sup>1</sup> The author, although but nineteen years old, is a mountaineer of experience, and writes of training for the Mt. Waddington expedition, as follows: "Between June 16th and 21st, 1942, Helmy Beckey, Walt Varney and I made first ascents of seven rock spires on Kangaroo Ridge, in the N.E. part of the Cascade Mtns. in Washington. Four of these, Big Kangaroo, The Temple, Half Moon Peak and Mushroom Tower, were technical climbs. To reach the summit of the latter (8300 ft.), we had to overcome a pitch a good deal more difficult than anything encountered on Mt. Waddington."

The author's brother, Helmy Beckey, now seventeen years of age, was a member of the Seattle Mountaineers' party in the Bugaboos in 1941, making the first ascent of the S. Tower of Howser Spire (*A. A. J.*, iv, 421).—Ed.

taken by previous parties the glacier snout had receded tremendously in recent years. Shortly after mounting the snout we obtained the first view of our goal, buoying our spirits up greatly. Waddington's twin summits, covered by ice and fresh snow, and flanked by heavy clouds, seemed to throw a challenge at us. The immensity of "Mystery Mountain" became apparent as we came ever closer on the smooth glacier ribbons. A badly crevassed section of the Franklin near its junction with the Confederation Glacier gave us an hour's superfluous exercise each time we passed. Aside from that, however, the glacier afforded good travel to Icefall Point, 13 miles from the snout. During our backpacking on the glacier, rain fell incessantly. The well reputed poor weather of the Coast Range seemed to hold its own. The cabin built by the Munday-Hall party in 1934 near Saffron Creek was our base for drying out and sleeping during much of this time.

By July 12th a large pile of food and equipment had accumulated beneath a boulder amid the heather slopes of Icefall Point. Here the Franklin Glacier bends around the point at right angles, many huge crevasses contrasting with smoother slopes beyond. Dominating this wonderful snowy scene, stood Waddington, its summit enveloped in a few wisps of fog. Since "Mystery Mountain" was in poor shape for climbing we decided first to attempt reaching a range of peaks north of the Tiedemann Glacier via a route through the Corridor, Waddington, and Splendor Glaciers.

Early on the 13th we plodded across the upper Franklin on 5-ft. skis. The pitted snow, always present below 8000 ft., slowed us considerably. The 70-lb. packs seemed to increase in weight as we moved up the Corridor Glacier, and later Ice Valley. The latter is truly a magnificent place with Mt. Munday, Mt. Agur, Spearman Peak, and Waddington itself all towering above. Huge nimbo-cumulus clouds began making their appearance in the S. by early afternoon, their towering thunderheads slowly approaching. When we reached the 9500-ft. pass at the head of Ice Valley in the evening strong gusts of wind were accompanied by sleet. A partially sheltered campspot was found in the bottom of a filled-in crevasse, but it was cold work pitching the tent under such conditions. The radius stove was soon cooking dinner as we lay in our sleeping bags listening to the tempest outside. The blizzard refused to abate the following day and night as the new snow rapidly mounted in depth. Two feet had fallen by the 15th when

we abandoned camp and skied to Icefall Point on fast snow. A return to Knight Inlet was made for the 4th relay to Icefall Point. July 20th found us again at the 9500 ft. pass with the weather perfect. By some stroke of luck the weather remained this way for the remainder of our stay in the mountains, interrupted only by two short thunderstorms.

A long ski traverse on the Waddington Glacier at an average elevation of 9500 ft. led to the head of the Splendor Glacier on the opposite side of the main divide of the Coast Range. Camp was made at about 9000 ft. on this glacier, which drops steeply for over 3000 ft. into the Tiedemann Glacier. A marvellous view was had here of the Tiedemann Glacier Valley, surrounded by high peaks on all sides. Mt. Waddington and the Tiedemann Peaks across the valley were contrasted by the huge icefalls on the S. side. After a day of reconnoitering, a route was found to the Tiedemann Glacier. However, it necessitated much roped skiing and complicated ice climbing. Innumerable dubious snow bridges, spanning huge crevasses, had to be crossed. The lower part of the descent led through a maze of séracs in which there was danger of avalanches. Upon viewing the route from camp below it seemed inconceivable that anyone would have attempted it with packs. We were unfortunately unable to climb for a few days, due to my receiving an infected knee and Helmy straining his back in a short slip. By this time our food supply here was running low and the most advisable thing to do was to return to the 9500 ft. pass camp. The latter was reached on the 27th after a long day of ski climbing. Due to the dangers and difficulties of the Splendor Glacier we did not consider a second relay. The Coast Range crest had been crossed on ski for the second time, but this route certainly wasn't practicable. We felt rather badly about not being able to climb on the Tiedemann Peaks, but the thought of an ascent of Waddington was consoling. Failures as well as successes accompany the mountaineer.

The highlight of several days spent ski mountaineering at the head of the Waddington Glacier was the ascent of Mt. Munday on ski. From the 11,500-ft. summit the vast glaciers and innumerable peaks of this section of the Coast Range were seen to be a good advantage. The hanging glaciers that drain the Homathko Snowfield were clearly seen to the E. The Franklin and Corridor Glaciers seemed spread out like a map at our feet. Mt. Waddington, which

we hoped to come to grips with soon, was given a careful scrutiny. Crusted snow speeded up our descent to camp. An hour was spent in scaling a spectacular rock tower 1 mile E. of camp. This helped limber up unused finger muscles.

Waddington was uppermost in our minds as we moved camp to the lower section of Ice Valley. The enormous mountain, attempted 16 times before being climbed, towered 6000 ft. above. The rock appeared to be fairly ice-free, and barring any sudden storms now was the time for an attempt. A shortcut from Ice Valley over an 8000-ft. pass E. of Mt. Jester enabled us to quickly move camp to the Lower Dais Glacier on ski. This preceded a short return to Icefall Point for additional food. A pool of water at this campsite saved us the trouble of melting snow, which we were well accustomed to. Leaving a supply of reserve food, the ascent to a high camp 300 ft. below Waddington's S. face was made in 4 hours on ski very early on August 5th to avoid the soft snow one encounters in midday.

A careful study of the 2400-ft. face convinced me that the route taken on the first ascent in 1936 was best. The bergschrund, however, looked very bad and we decided to investigate that day. We soon found that a crossing was impossible underneath the ice couloir up which the route lay. The bergschrund was then crossed far to the right of this point from where a long traverse on steep ice brought us directly below the ice couloir. We roped down across the schrund at this point from a rock projection, leaving a fixed rope behind. The snow softened under the blazing afternoon sun as we made preparations for the climb in our camp. Tomorrow we hoped to do what had been done only once before and tried so often in former years. I didn't sleep very well that night due to the tent walls shaking under a sharp wind. Perhaps the anticipation of the day we had so long been looking forward to had also something to do with that.

Camp was left at 4.00 on the 6th. Despite the fixed rope it was hard work scaling the vertical ice of the schrund. The morning dawned clear and bright as we mounted the ice slope and first 400-ft. of couloir on crampons. Conditions became poor here and slowed our pace greatly. One or two inches of loose snow atop the 50-55° ice made the climbing extremely treacherous. Steps had to be cut in many places after clearing away the loose snow. A 100-ft. section of verglased rock had to be climbed where the

couloir had been broken. It was aggravating to lose so much time on the lower part of the peak, for we were getting far behind schedule. The left branch of the couloir led to a band covered with glare ice and rotten rock. Over 100 ft. were behind at noon when a very dangerous rock traverse was made to the large and steep snowfield in mid-face. Rotten rock and exposure made this traverse quite nerve-racking. The sheer face above certainly seemed forbidding but appeared possible. A constant watch above was kept while crossing the snowfield for large rock avalanches, often accompanied by ice, were seen falling here. This was the belayer's second duty. The condition of the snowfield varied from glare ice to soft snow in which we sank to our waists.

By 4 o'clock I had changed to tennis shoes with felt pullovers and we rapidly mounted the slabs of the upper face. The pullovers adhered well to the rock when wet and could be removed quickly for more friction on dry rock. Rock climbing was a pleasant relief from the ice work below. In 2 hours the base of the final 500-ft. rockwall was reached, Helmy leading across two steep snowpatches. Ice-axes and one pair of boots were left behind here. Crampons had been cached lower down. I decided to attempt a face route slightly to the right of the chimney climbed by Wiessner and House. Difficulties immediately increased as we started up the nearly vertical wall. For 300 ft. wet slabs and difficult pitches, with a few overhangs mixed in, were climbed. Many pitons were used for safety on this wall, which was no place for one who suffered from acrophobia. The most difficult pitch was a traverse on a vertical face with very delicate holds followed by a wet high angled slab with few useful holds. I had luckily noticed the wet slab from below and redonned my felt pullovers, for one couldn't hope to stick on the wet slab in tennis shoes. Several times ice fragments broke off the summit ridge and thundered down the chimneys to our left. I was inwardly glad we weren't in their paths. A short traverse brought us to a vertical chimney, the same one climbed by Wiessner, that led to the narrow snow-covered summit ridge. At 8.30 P.M. the second ascent of Waddington was made. A wonderful view rewarded us, but little time could be had for rest. The match-can register in the cairn was found and then we hurriedly left the summit at sunset. Our chosen bivouac spot was a ledge 150 ft. beneath the summit. Anchored to pitons, only a can of sterno and the reliable tentsack kept away the cold. Darkness soon enveloped the distant peaks and glaciers. The icy summit of

Waddington could be seen just above, jutting into the starry sky. The stillness was shattered only by an occasional rock fall.

Shortly before seven we were sufficiently warmed to begin roping down the sheer face. The sun hit us as the snowfield was crossed. When we reached the upper part of the ice couloir in the early afternoon it was decided to wait until evening before continuing the descent. Rocks were bouncing regularly down the couloir. It would have been suicidal to be there at this time. A noisy waterfall flowed down the rocks and ice in the couloir's trough.

We started down again at 6.30, roping off on the sides of the couloir. When about 400 ft. above the bergschrund, Helmy was hit on the knee by one of a flurry of rocks that sped down the mountain side. All hope of reaching camp that night was gone because of a heavily bleeding cut. This was Helmy's 17th birthday present, donated by Mt. Waddington. The night was spent sitting on a steep scree slope, thoroughly wet from a snowpatch above. The descent to camp was made early the next morning.

There was a secondary thrill in reviewing the climb from camp. The lower half of the face was undoubtedly in better condition for climbing during the first ascent. The upper face where the greatest technical difficulties are found took us but 4.5 hours; the lower consuming the remainder of the 16.5 hours spent ascending. Had we made the climb several weeks earlier the ice couloir would have offered much faster climbing. We experienced a large amount of rock- and ice-fall on this route. I was always more worried on the climb about this than the technical difficulties. Future parties might find an easier and safer route on the E. face, which would have to be reached from the upper slopes of the Tiedemann Glacier. We didn't see enough of the N. face to justify a statement of its possibilities. The upper part, however, looked very steep and covered with ice and loose snow.

Several days were spent in high camp resting and eating the remainder of our food. Roped skiing among the crevasses of the Dais Icefall was fun. Our skis surely had proved their worth on the trip. We hardly could have done without them during our exploits in July. The welcome heather slopes of Icefall Point provided a pleasant relief from the 23 nights spent sleeping on snow. Two days of rest here put Helmy's knee in better condition for the hike out. Knight Inlet was reached on the 16th, bringing to a close our summer's adventure.