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FROM THE SUMMIT OF EGMONT 2ZB Climbs High For Unique Broadcast

RADIO history was made when members of 2ZB's staff, after many experiences and hard climbing, conducted a shortwave broadcast from the summit of Mt. Egmont at an elevation of 8,260 feet on a recent Sunday.

Journeying to the Dawson Falls Hostel in the 2ZB motor truck, the unit, comprising W. Elliot (station director), Peter Hutt (production supervisor), Roy Neate (engineer), and Brian Petrie (technician), packed their gear and made ready for the trip.

Early on the Saturday morning, after apportioning the loads—which included two boxes of batteries, a transmitter, a receiving set and a portable mast which looked remarkably like an enlarged fishing rod—the party set off up the mountain slopes through the bush. Two members of the Egmont Alpine Club shouldered the heaviest loads, and received the heartfelt thanks of the 2ZB adventurers, who had never before experienced the delights and hardships of mountaineering.

Up the "Zig Zag"

Peter states that at first he thought how slowly they were travelling, but soon realised when they came to the really steep pinches that they had been making good time. The bush gradually became more stunted, and then the "Zig Zag" was reached—an almost perpendicular track through the tussock. The party pleaded for frequent rests, and at one stage thought they would never reach their objective, the Syme Hut, as they were climbing bare scoria and shingle, in which they seemed to slip two steps back for every one they took.

At last Fathom Peak, where the Syme Hut stands, was reached, and a very hungry party had lunch. Leaving sleeping gear and food in the hut, they went on to the summit with the transmitting gear for a test. There was little snow about, only in the gullies, but ice axes had to be used by some of the party to cut steps in the hard, frozen shingle. Eventually, and with



Crossing the crater with the equipment for the mountain shortwave station. Left to right: Roy Neate (2ZB engineer), Peter Hutt, W. Elliot (station director, 2ZB)

many sighs of relief, the summit was reached, and although the crater was well filled with snow, the climbers were able to enjoy some sunbathing and admire the glorious view afforded by a perfect day. After devouring two packets of raisins, they carried out the tests.

Cached for the Night

With many qualms as to whether the equipment had survived the hectic journey, Roy Neate managed to assemble it.

When the climbers were satisfied that the gear was in good order, everything was packed in canvas bags and placed in stone cairns, safe from weather and wind, in preparation for the morrow. After a somewhat precipitate downward trip, and a few anxious moments, the Hut was reached, where the party was joined by ten members of the Mt. Egmont Alpine Club, and a member of

the Swiss Alpine Club, who entertained the party during the evening with tales of exploits and adventures in the Swiss Alps.

The Next Morning

A clear, starlit night promised a perfect day for the broadcast. However, they woke early next morning to a world of thick fog and howling wind, with a visibility of about 5 yards. Fortunately, about 9.30 a.m. the weather cleared, and at 10.30 a start was made. The party was augmented by the arrival of more alpinists from the Hostel. In all, about 150 made the climb.

There were grave doubts as to whether they could make the summit by 1 p.m.—the time set for the broadcast—but the journey was made in one hour, forty minutes.

Plaque Unveiled

From the top were seen the faraway peaks of Tongariro, Ruapehu and Ngauruhoe, and below, the towns of Eltham, Stratford and New Plymouth. At 1.30 p.m. the broadcast began, Peter reading an extract from the log of Captain Cook in which the explorer narrated seeing this lofty mountain and naming it after the Earl of Egmont. Rod Syme, captain of the Egmont Alpine Club (deputising for W. C. Weston, chairman of the Egmont National Park Board), unveiled a bronze plaque which had that day been set in a rock on the summit in commemoration of the first ascent of Mt. Egmont on December 23, 1839, by Dr. Ernest Dieffenbach and James ("Worser") Heberly. Two members of the executive of the Egmont Alpine Club, Des Ryan and Ben Shaw, gave some highlights of mountaineering on Mt. Egmont.

During the ceremony the summit was more than crowded, and Peter said that it reminded him of a homeward-bound tram at 5 p.m.—only there were no straps to hang on to!

An excellent climax to a most unusual broadcast was a yodel by the Swiss alpinist.



A picture taken on the topmost point of the mountain. Engineer Neate and the shortwave equipment are in the foreground