

Maxine Egan

One of British Columbia's Steelhead and Salmon Grande Ladies Anglers



I was looking at pictures in my display cabinet and there was Maxine in the frame smiling at me. It is a picture taken by her husband Van on the Quinsam River in 1957. I don't recall how many years ago she gave me that picture and wrote on it "To a good friend and fisherman, love Maxine." Maxine was a good serious fisherman and was featured in the *Pioneers at Home and Abroad* in Wilma Paterson & Prof. Peter Behan's book *Salmon & Women* (1990). In that write up it is mentioned that Maxine's fishing exploits from the 1950s and 1960s were often subjects of west coast sports writers. Also in the write-up they mention that she is the only women to win the Lillian Sparrow Trophy of the Tye Club of British Columbia with fish of 47 ½ and 48 pounds. Maxine largest tye was an estimated 55 lb which she fought for 2 hours and then released it. She is responsible for getting the fly-fishing-only section on the Campbell and the driving force behind stopping the dredging of the Campbell to accommodate larger ships.

Maxine was married to one of my best angling friends Van Egan. This is Valentine's Day and their meeting is as steelheaders love story. Van was a school teacher in Wisconsin and he came to BC to fish steelhead in the summer. I think it was 1955 he was wandering along the banks of the Stamp River fly fishing for steelhead when he met the beautiful woman steelheader, Maxine Sutherland. They were married a month later with Rod Haig-Brown acting as best man. Van often joked about fishing with Maxine saying he cut bait while she fished or that she was off to the Gold River fishing with Haig-Brown, their neighbour, while Van toiled away in the classroom. Maxine even has Gold River run named after her. Most anglers traipsing into Egan's Run think it is named after Van but it is Maxine's. Back in the 1960s there was no public access to forest roads. They were mostly gated under lock and key but one of Rod Haig-Brown's friends Skate Hames was the local predator hunter and he had keys to the gates. It was on those Gold River trips with Haig-Brown and Hames that she found her favourite water which became know as Egan's Run.

I remember one of the last steelhead she caught. Van and she had taken a trip up to the Nimpkish system and were fishing one of the smaller streams that Rod Haig-Brown fished back in the 1930s and Maxine caught a nice summer-run steelhead on a fly I devised called an As Specified. She was so pleased that I framed a picture of her with her fish and a sample fly. A great lady and ardent angler.

Art Lingren

