



Caraz III, showing The Usual Suspects. KRIS ERICKSON

Several weeks later, Erickson joined me for another project in the Yuracochcha Valley. On July 29, in a 21-hour push, we climbed the southwest face of Santa Cruz Norte (5829m) via *Caveat Emptor* (ED, mixed 90°, ice to 95°, 750m). We were stopped short of the summit (which was about 100 meters higher) due to deep unstable snow on the double corniced ridge. I had attempted this line in late May with David Sharman, but I fell ill and was forced to retreat.

BRETT WOLF, *unaffiliated*

Palcaraju Sur, New Route. Palcaraju Sur (6100m) is at the end of the Cojup range in the Cordillera Blanca. Pedro Gonzales Bris and I established base camp at 4300 meters on July 3 in the ruins of the site Electroperu once used to modify runoffs into the lake that retains the water from the glaciers. After acclimating by going up Jacomontepunku (5400m) on July 4 and resting the next day in base camp, we started our ascent on the 6th. We slept in an ice cave on the glacier so we could begin the climb at five in the morning on July 7. We started the climb on the right of a rocky pillar, which gave a more protected and safer line, then traveled to the left to get to the most direct line that comes down from the south summit. The first third of the route was done over ice with a moderate incline of 65-70°, then we found a mixed area that was steeper and with poorer ice conditions (80°) which made the ascent slower and more precarious. After this section we were benighted and had to bivouac in an ice cave below a meringue-like cornice formed typically in this area. The next morning, after a short section of rock (V+ AO) and an upward traverse on vertical ice, we arrived at the summit of Palcaraju Sur. Our intent had been to follow the summit arête until the joining of the main and southern summit points and then to descend from the main summit. But due to the instability of the arête, which was formed by meringues of rotten powder snow, we decided to descend on the

Santa Cruz Norte, showing Caveat Emptor to its high point. KRIS ERICKSON



opposite side from where we had done the ascent. After eight rappels of 60 meters each we arrived at the glacier where we bivied again in an ice cave. The next day we crossed the ridge between Pucarranra and Palcaraju and descended to base camp. We named our route *Un Rayo de Sol* (ED- 90° A0, 800m).

JOSE MARIA POLANCO, *Spain*

Cordillera Blanca, Slovenian Activity. Meta Boncelj made a ski descent from the summit of Pisco (5752m) on July 14. She then made a ski descent of Chopicalci (6350m) via the normal route from 6200 meters on July 22. This was the highest Slovenian female ski descent to date. On the east face of Cayesh (5721m), Grega Lačen and Peter Mežnar made a variation to the 1983 American route, calling it *Tretji Svet* (ice VI, rock F5c, 950m), on July 17-18. The ascent was done in alpine style and they rappelled down the route. They reported hard and dangerous mixed climbing with bad protection. The new route strays right from the American route, joins it in the middle of the face, follows it for four pitches, and then continues directly toward the summit. Prior to the ascent, they also attempted a completely independent line to the left, but were stopped by an overhanging rock barrier without natural cracks. The rock was so hard that even bolting was almost impossible.

MIHA PETERNEL, *Planinska zveza Slovenije*

A topo of Tretji Svet shows that, although it began to the right of the 1983 route, it shares the same ground from 5200 meters to the top. This was confirmed with Mark Richey, one of the 1983 ascensionists.-Ed.

Ranrapalca, North Face, Variation. It was reported that Patrick Knoll and Peruvians Guillermo Mejia-Ordóñez and Eduardo Angulo-Zambrano did a new start to the north face (TD+ 5.9 A2, 3,000 feet) of Ranrapalca (6162m) in the first week of August. The variation follows a single crack in the buttress at the base of the face for 500 feet and is mostly protected from rockfall.

Americans Brad Johnson and Blues Voisard also were active in the Cordillera Blanca, climbing nine peaks in two months, including the rarely climbed 2,000-foot east face of Artesonraju, which involves 60-80° mixed climbing. (*Climbing* 173)

CORDILLERA OCCIDENTAL

Cordillera Occidental, High Altitude Archaeology and Various Ascents. High altitude archaeology was again the focus of several expeditions on the volcanoes near Arequipa during the last three months of 1997. Team leaders Jose Antonio Chavez (Universidad Catolica) and Johan Reinhard (The Mountain Institute, Explorer in Residence at the National Geographic Society) were supported by Jim Underwood (The Mountain Institute's Sacred Mountain Program), Peruvian archaeology students Jimmy Bouroncle and Orlando Jaen, and a climbing/excavation team of seven. Most of the team have been working together for several years.

Volcan Pichu Pichu (18,600') was climbed in October from the east for two weeks of excavation just below the summit from a high camp of 18,300 feet. Most of the work was an extension of the excavation that took place in late 1996 (and some preliminary work in 1989 and 1981) which produced extensive artifacts and remains (filmed by the Discovery Channel, broadcast in January, 1998). This year we worked the site to bedrock, found nothing more, and then performed backfill and recovery. Most noteworthy is that the entire main summit