

seems to have been a ceremonial platform, much of which collapsed long ago. The expedition was generously supported by Bell Sygma of Canada with extensive power supply and communications gear; a team of six engineers, managers, and family led by Doug Tipple and John Lochow came along for a week to get the gear working and climb the peak. As a result, the expedition was updated on the Web daily from the mountain by Yancy Hall of *National Geographic*. Pictures and details can be found at www.nationalgeographic.com or www.reinhard.sympatico.ca.

Volcan Ubinas (c.18,602') was climbed in one day in late October during the return from Pichu Pichu for the purpose of briefly searching for archaeological sites (and just for fun). This peak is one of the sacred group listed in early documents of the sixteenth century, but no archaeological remains were found (there is a history of volcanic activity here, and current venting).

Huarancante (a.k.a. Chucura, c.17,800'), the site of significant finds of Inca figurines and a bronze club-head in 1981 and 1989, was climbed next and was found to have been heavily looted many years ago. Ampato (20,700'), site of the Ice Maiden find several years ago, was the last climb of this season. Two other mummies had been found in October, 1996, and another was found in December at 19,300 feet. The team spent 19 days on Ampato this year.

Climbs made in 1996 in addition to Ampato, but not reported previously in *The American Alpine Journal*, were on Sara Sara (18,061') (detailed on the website pbs.org/nova/peru) and Hualca Hualca (c.20,000').

None of the climbs are particularly difficult from a modern mountaineering perspective. Our real challenges lie in the logistics of being able to do careful work in frozen earth at altitude over long periods and to maintain electronic, communications, and energy systems. The Inca were doing heavy work at these sites five centuries ago with much less supportive climbing and camping gear. Hualca Hualca is particularly significant in light of the challenging steep rock sections that the Inca ascended by hauling logs up for aid. Wild grass (ichu) was used to help as climbing footholds.

All expedition finds remain the property of Peru in the possession of Universidad Catolica and its museum, established for this purpose.

JIM UNDERWOOD

BOLIVIA

Bolivia, Various Activity. In June, a U.S. climber died of a heart attack on the normal route on Huayna Potosi. In August, a guided French climber died on Sajama from pulmonary edema at Camp I after descending from high camp. A Japanese woman died of edema while attempting the Payachatas, two 6000-meter-plus peaks on the Bolivia-Chile border. These were the only reported climbing deaths in Bolivia in 1997.

The Austrian guide in charge of the June, 1994, disaster on Illimani, Wilfrid Studer, was back in Bolivia, climbing on Sajama despite the loss of both feet to frostbite in 1994. That year, Studer climbed the normal route on Illimani in a storm with two clients and was forced to make an unplanned bivouac at more than 6000 meters. Continued bad weather prevented descent the next day, so the three snowholed again. During the night, one went mad, attacked his partners, then later walked out of the snowhole saying he was going to a restaurant. He was never seen again. The weather improved on the third day and Studer, together with the surviving client, started descending, but the client dropped dead from exhaustion. Studer continued down the southeast side of the mountain and back to La Paz, a hospital, and Austria,

in quick succession.

The year saw the first signs of the development of weekend climbing in Bolivia. The late Stanley Shepard, a U.S. citizen living in La Paz, wrote in the 1981 *AAJ*, "At the moment, La Paz has one weekend climber: me. I solo a lot." Little has changed, even though there are no practical reasons why someone living in La Paz at 3660 meters should not make weekend forays to the surrounding mountains. A jeep to the base of Huayna Potosi (6088m) takes one and a half hours from the center of the city; to Illimani (6439m) takes two and half hours and the Condoriri group can be reached in two hours. But the small number of climbers who own jeeps—and the fact that those who do tend to work Saturday mornings—means that virtually no weekend climbing takes place.

La Paz resident geologists Brock Bolin (U.S.) and Rod Feldtmann (Australia) climbed Cabeza del Condor (a.k.a. Condoriri, Gran Condoriri, 5648m) over one weekend in August via the route of first ascent (done solo in April, 1941, by Wilfrid Kuehn from Germany). The route (AD+ 55°, 400m) is a classic alpine ridge and is without doubt one of the best routes in Bolivia. The pair returned later the same month to climb the imposing south face (60° D-, 600m) of Ala Izquierda (a.k.a. Ala Norte, Condoriri West Peak, 5532m). Jean Steege (U.S.) and I did the French Route (AD+ 55°, 300m) on Huayna Potosi from the bergschrund in a straight push from the Zongo Pass (4770m). We were up and down in 26 hours (August 23-24). We encountered deep snow between the Campamento Argentino high camp and the base of the route and spent a rather long time getting back to the normal route to descend. Another feat no non-resident climber should attempt was the climbing of Illimani (6439m) in less than 24 hours by resident engineer Robert Riesinger (Austria) and partner Carlos Cancino (Chile) on September 14. The pair left La Paz at 11 p.m. and drove to the first camp, Puente Roto (4400m), via an unused mining track. They set off at 2 a.m. and reached the Nido de Condores high camp at 5400 meters at 6 a.m., where they stopped for breakfast. They left high camp at 7 a.m., summited at 1:15 p.m., descended, and got back to the jeep at 5:30 p.m., arriving in La Paz at 8:30 p.m.

Also this year, French-born guide Alain Mesili was released from jail.

YOSSI BRAIN, *United Kingdom*

Apolobamba Area, Various Ascents. The first team out during the 1997 season was the Walsall expedition of Dean Wiggin, Eamonn Flood and Yossi Brain (U.K.), who climbed in the Katantica group north of the Pelechuco Valley. The torture of the 18-hour bus journey to Pelechuco was alleviated by the liberal use of Valium. On May 24, we climbed the southeast ridge of P.5550m and continued along the northwest ridge to Katantica Oeste (5630m)—a new route (PD). We camped just below the col between P.5550m and Katantica Central, and the next day climbed a new route on the west ridge of Katantica Central (5610m) via a beautiful line (75°+ AD+, max. 65°). The cornice switched from right to left; on the right-hand (south) side, we found bottomless powder. It was also the first British ascent of the mountain. We then dropped down the east-southeast face to camp below the col between Katanticas Central and Este. (The east-southeast face was used by the Germans Karl Gross and Dieter Hain for the first ascent on May 27, 1968.) On May 26, we went through the pass between Katanticas Central and Este and headed up the north face (AD 65°, 300m) in three hours (a new route), then followed the ridge up for 15 minutes to the summit of P.5560, a first British and second-ever ascent of the mountain. We continued for 30 minutes along the impressive ridge southeast to the base of Katantica Este's summit pyramid. We climbed a beautiful 50-meter pitch (70° AD) up the southwest face to join the mushy northeast face, which we fol-