Aconcagua, soloed what is probably a new route up the west face of El Almirante Nieto. The route follows a snow couloir for a couple thousand feet until it turns to a small ice runnel that winds through the final headwall.

We then focused our attention on climbing a new and hopefully easy route up the low angle northeast face of Cuerno Principal. We hoped to climb the granite quickly and easily so that we would have time to complete the last hundred feet of hideously rotten slate that makes up the summit. Our bad luck returned early on the day before our scheduled climb when a large rockfall wiped out our proposed route. Plan B was another "easy" looking line 100 meters to the right. High winds blew rocks down on us as we simulclimbed approximately 300 meters of easy terrain with occasional moves of 5.9. Later, as we began to belay individual pitches, I pulled a suitcase-sized flake off, which missed Darrell by inches and caused him to slide off the belay ledge. The flake landed on our rope, cutting it in several places. Again, we were forced to retreat.

Our luck finally improved as we climbed stellar crack systems terminating at the rotten metamorphic layer on the east face of Cuerno Este. The route roughly follows Penning and Tague's *Vuelo del Condor* (III 5.11 A1), but unfortunately did not allow for a summit. Knowing our weather window could end any day, we pushed our timetable up, traded our shredded ropes for a packhorse, and headed up the Rio Ascencio Valley to the ever-popular Japanese camp occupied by a large Spanish team, a Brazilian team, and the lone American, Steve Schneider. Steve gave us a topo for an all free route up the west face of Torre Norte called *Taller del Sol* (V 5. 10+). The next day Darrell and I climbed the spectacular 500-meter dihedral system in 24 hours, base camp to base camp. The experience was special not only because of the high quality of the route, but also because it was the only summit that Darrell and I would stand on in Patagonia. The feeling was bittersweet, though: Only seven hours after Darrell and I descended the couloir below the North Tower, a huge rockfall from the summit of the Central Tower fell 1000 meters, killing two members of the Spanish team in an avalanche of rock and snow in the adjacent couloir (*see below*).

DYLAN TAYLOR

The Mummer, Cuerno Oriental, and the Sharksfin, Various Activity. During March and April of 1998, Tom Bauman, Alan Kearney and Jack Lewis climbed in Patagonia and performed clean-up work with the help of a grant from Polartec. On March 24, Bauman was hit in the arm and ribs by rockfall on the yet unclimbed East Face of the Mummer in the Pingos Valley (Chileans have indiscriminately renamed the valley the Bader Valley, which is very confusing as most maps and books refer to it as the Pingos Valley). The party bailed off the Mummer after climbing only two pitches and then changed objectives. On March 29, Lewis was blown 15 feet through the air by a gust of wind while hiking. He tumbled down talus another 20 feet, sustaining cuts and bruises. On April 7, all three climbed a nine-pitch route up the granitic East Face of Cuerno Oriental (sometimes referred to as Cuerno Este) (5.11 A2) and did not go to the summit, a half mile to the northwest and up rotten black rock. On April 14, Kearney soloed the South Ridge of the Sharksfin (a.k.a. Aleta del Tiburon) in the Frances Valley, Grade III or IV 5.9 (a route put up by the French in 1982). This was during a spell of four days of good weather, the longest during their stay. The party carried trash out of the Japanese and Torre Camps in the Rio Ascencio Valley and from the British and Italian Camps in the Frances Valley. They also spoke with Paine Park officials about the problems of overuse in the park. They found the climber's camps actually cleaner than those camps used only by trekkers.

ALAN KEARNEY

*Recipient of a Polartec grant