

After an interim including lots of chess, box wine, and a basecamp asado, Zack and I attempted a free variation to Adrenalina Vertical on the North Tower. Unfortunately, Zack violated the first rule of trundling (do not trundle on yourself) and injured his hand. Consequently we were forced to retreat to the comforts of base camp and the med kit. A few days later Brittany Griffith and Annie Overlin joined me in the French Valley, and we climbed the standard route up the Shark's Fin (V 5.9). It was their third day in Chile.

Lots of talented climbers made good use of this sunny season, and I'm sure our efforts will be lost among a multitude of ascents. However, there is one important issue I want to share. As climbers we gain an amazing reward in our pursuit of mountain adventure. Ideally, this is a pure nature experience in which we push our physical and emotional limits for a brief glimpse of our connection with the earth, while pacing our creativity to the rhythm of mountain processes. This requires a special interest in the natural world and a heightened awareness of its environs. What I'm trying to say is this: We get a lot out of being in the wilderness, and this, like everything else in nature, must result in an ebb and flow, a constant recycling of energies and balance. We are lucky to see nature unclothed but must also be aware of our role as its stewards. It is up to us to carry out our trash, remove fixed ropes and unnecessary gear. Become aware, and act appropriately. There are too many mounds of shit and wads of toilet paper adorning base camp forests. Take a small shovel, bury your waste, and burn your toilet paper. If you must fix ropes, remove them when you leave. This is an appeal that benefits us all. We must show respect if we are to be respected. Preserve the experience for others and help our world maintain its natural balance.

SEAN LEARY

*North summit of North Tower of Paine, free ascent.* On February 17, 2002, Allison Pennings and I climbed a new route on the west face of the north summit of the North Tower of Paine. Our route follows the route Adrenalina Vertical for two pitches before traversing left 40 feet into the obvious body slot. Above the body slot the route continues straight up. We both free climbed the entire route, which went at 5.11+, and was done in a day without bolts or pitons. On the previous day, February 16, we managed to free climb the Bonington-Whillans route on the Central Tower, with Michael leading all pitches. The crux pitch was a variation to the original route. Instead of climbing out the roof to access the Red Dihedral, we continued up to the left of the roof for about 35 feet before moving right into the dihedral. I believe this is different from the way Sean and Zack went on the first free ascent (it sounds like they traversed right 5 or 10 feet above the roof). Our variation was 5.11.

MIKE PENNINGS

*(Editor's note: Allison Pennings was likely the second woman to summit the Central Paine Tower. Italian Ginella Pagani summited the tower in 1987, with Ermanno Salvaterra.)*

*North, Central, and South Towers of Paine, solo link-up.* On February 16, 2002, I awoke in Campamento Japanese at 2:00 a.m., got caffeinated, and departed camp at 3:00 a.m. I intended to make a solo link-up of the Towers of Paine. With just over a week to go before my departure to home in California, I knew this would be my final try. I planned to climb all three towers by

their normal routes in as continuous a push as possible. I started climbing up the North Tower via the Monzino route at 8:30 a.m. and summited at 9:11 a.m., for a time of 41 minutes. (Two weeks earlier I had made the climb in 35 minutes.) I roped up only for the initial 70 meters.

After descending the North Tower I began climbing the Central Tower via the Bonington-Whillans route at 9:55 a.m. and summited at 5:14 p.m., for a time of 7:19. On the summit ridge I encountered newlyweds Mike and Allison Pennings, who were on their way down after summing a few minutes earlier.

A brief weather check on the summit revealed completely clear skies, with a view to the Pacific Ocean, so I began the committing rappels down the south face of the Central Tower. A 2,000-foot descent down the Grupo Ragni route, with 16 rappels and some scrambling, landed me on the big walkway that crosses the west face of the Central Tower at about 10:30 p.m. I hunkered down for the night in just my clothes. I do not think I slept, but I got some much-needed rest. At 7:00 a.m. on February 17 I got moving again under perfect skies. I continued my descent, pioneering a way down a 400-foot face that landed me in the large couloir between the Central and South towers.

At 10:25 a.m. I started up the Asti route and summited the South Tower at 7:50 p.m., for a climbing time of 9:25. After 15 minutes on top, with the weather still holding, I began my descent and arrived at the bottom six hours later at about 2:00 a.m. At 6:00 a.m. I staggered back into Campamento Japanese, for a round-trip time of 51 hours from base camp to base camp.

This was my fifth attempt to make the Tower Traverse (or link-up). Along the way I climbed the North Tower four times, the Central Tower twice, and the South Tower once. I also endured three open bivouacs, two full-blown epic retreats from near the Central Tower's summit, one life-threatening rockfall, and an emotional rollercoaster. It is the first traverse/link-up of the Towers of Paine, solo or otherwise.

STEVE SCHNEIDER, AAC

## PINGO VALLEY

*La Mascara, Ilusiones and Duncan's Dihedral; Paine Chico, West Face; Cuernos.* In early January 2002 Englishmen Andy Cave and Leo Houlding did the second ascent of and free climbed the route *Ilusiones* on the east face of *La Mascara*. *Ilusiones* was first climbed in January 2001 by Spaniards Alonso, Martos, and Pelaez. Cave and Houlding found it not to be extremely hard, managing to free it all at around 7a (5.12a), with some bad loose rock. They fixed 140 meters of rope on a rainy, windy day and came back down, then two days later climbed to the summit in nine and a half hours, descending in four hours.

Also in early January 2002 Dave Hesleden and Simon Nadin (U.K.) did the second ascent of *Duncan's Dihedral* (700m, 6b+ A1) on *Mascara's* south face. This route was first climbed by J. Copp and J. Merriam (U.S.) in 1998. Hesleden and Nadin found very cold conditions upon turning to the south-southwest side, as well as much loose rock.

Later in January Hesleden and Nadin climbed *Paine Chico* (also known as *Almirante Nieto*) via a couloir on the right side of the west face and then a snow ramp leading back to the left. They also did a five-pitch route immediately left of the prominent gap between the *Cuernos*. They found belays in place for the first three pitches but not beyond.

ROLANDO GARIBOTTI, AAC, *Club Andino Bariloche*