

Bath, Osvaldo Usaj, Steve Chaplin, Manuel Bugueno, Jed Brown, Pachi Ibarra, Jarmila Tyrnil and particularly, Camilo Rada. Without Camilo our efforts would not have been nearly as successful or productive as they have been. But also with us every meter was the head of the Omega Foundation, Bob Elias, whose vision, patience and unprecedented generosity have made all this possible.

DAMIEN GILDEA, *Australia*

ANTARCTIC PENINSULA

Belgian second ascents, Spanish first ascent. An international team sailed aboard the yacht Euronav Belgica to visit the Peninsula for the 110th anniversary of the Belgian Antarctic Expedition 1897-99. Fittingly, one of the peaks they climbed this season, Mt. Allo (285m) on Liege Island, had been discovered and named by that expedition. Despite encountering difficult sea-ice and weather conditions, they also made the second ascent of Celsus Peak (1,375m) on Brabant Island, and the second ascent of the prominent Mt. Banck (675m) above Argentino Channel, near Paradise Harbor.

The Spanish brothers Eneko and Iker Pou visited Cape Renard at the northern end of the scenic Lemaire Channel. The Cape is better known as the location of Cape Renard Tower—or “Una’s Tits”—a dual summited spire, one of the steepest mountain features on the Peninsula. However just south of the Tower is another steep massif with three peaks. The Spanish referred to these as “The Three Pigs” but named the one they summited Zerua Peak (Sky Peak). Their route Azken Paradisua (600m, 5.11 M6) is certainly one of the most technically difficult that has been climbed on the Antarctic Peninsula. See their report, below.

DAMIEN GILDEA, *Australia*

False Cape Renard, Zerua Peak, Azken Paradisua. From Cape Horn on December 10, my brother Iker, filmmakers Jabi Baraiazarra and Gotxon Arribas, and I sailed the legendary, harrowing, Drake Passage to Antarctica in the *Northanger*. Four long days from Argentina made it clear why no one wants to make this crossing by sailboat: nausea, dizziness, boredom, and anxiety—overwhelming anxiety when the waves crash over the boat, or when icebergs show up on the radar. Skippers Greg Landreth and Keri Pashuk call this crossing the “climber filter.” Most mountaineers never even get on board. Of those who do, many arrive too weak to do anything. And those who aren’t too weak are often too traumatized by the trip to climb. We reached Antarctica close to the latter group, but determined to stand our ground and fight.

Between Deception Island and Port Lockroy we saw many interesting concluding objectives for Iker’s and my 7 Walls 7 Continents Project, but unfortunately, none where the *Northanger* could lay anchor. We weren’t happy with what we saw at Port Lockroy, either, and decided to keep sailing southward. We finally found our objective at False Cape Renard: an awe-inspiring ensemble of three unclimbed peaks known to sailors as the Three Piggies. We set our sights on the one closest to the sea, which was the most accessible and the most beautiful, and landed on December 20 in good weather with low swell. Then the *Northanger* left in search of good anchorage. We had appallingly bad weather for the next four days and finally called the *Northanger* to bring more food. They arrived after four hours of sailing, but they could not stay



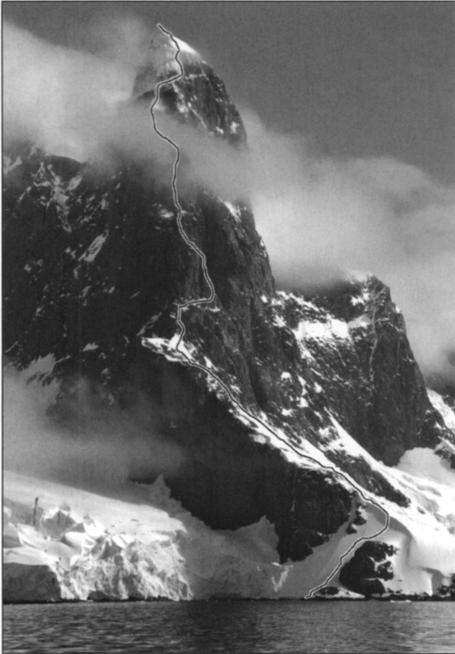
The Pou Brothers in Northanger, happy to have Zerua Peak behind them, the final climb of their "7 Walls 7 Continents Project." *Pou collection*

long at anchor because of the wind and icebergs pushing against the boat. After landing supplies in a rubber dinghy, a dangerous operation, we had a Christmas Eve party with plenty of drink. In the evening Iker went out to pee. This call of nature changed the course of the expedition. He asked me to come outside. We looked up at the sky: it was the best in the last four days. After five minutes of discussion, Iker and I rushed out to pack our backpacks. We were going up! Jabi and Gotxon still couldn't believe it. They said they'd wait in the tent until we reached the base of the wall, when we could call to tell them if we decided to go up. The forecast was still terrible, but we were in Antarctica and couldn't pass up a single opportunity.

It was very cold when we started to climb, but the light in Antarctica is incredible. With no night, we would be able to fight the cold by not stopping until we reached the summit and returned to base camp. Americans call this style "single-push." To shed all weight, we left behind our sleeping bags, bivouac sacks, tent, bolts.... If everything worked out and we didn't have to bivouac, the result could be perfect. But if we had to stop for any reason, at least some frostbite would be guaranteed.

The fourth pitch hit a snag: 7a with verglas. It was good this one was up to Iker, because in the cold I couldn't grip the rock and both my feet slipped on an ice sheet and I fell several meters into space. Higher, when I reached a ledge, I had to stop and warm my fingers because the pain was unbearable and my eyes were filled with tears. It hurt so badly that I arrived dizzy at the belay. My next two pitches were gorgeous 6a's. Iker led the pitch after that: verglased 6b+. The ice on the rock was giving us hell, but we were making it. After another couple of pitches we came to a snow ramp and then bad rock. Every so often, Iker repeated the same question: "How are we going to get down?" But after several pitches of shattered rock and steep mixed climbing up to M6, made harder by only having two axes between us, we embraced on the summit.

We still couldn't believe we had made it, that the 7 Walls 7 Continents Project was finally complete. The panorama up there was breathtaking, with hundreds of virgin mountains,



Azken Paradizua, the first route up Zeruia Peak on the False Cape Renard. Pou Collection

channels of water packed with icebergs, and a solitude like nothing we have ever known. We felt fulfilled.

The rappelling was tense: the rock crumbled and we wracked our brains trying not to make mistakes. Problems flourished on the final rappels, including an anchor piton pulling out and a near-death escape during an overhanging rappel, a brush with disaster. After eight hours of dangerous rappelling, we felt overcome with tension and extreme fatigue when we finally embraced Jabi and Gotxon, who had fearfully watched the events play out. When we reached base camp we were too weak to celebrate anything. We had a bite and went to sleep. It had been 24 hours from camp to camp, and we could take no more.

ENEKO POU, *Spain*

SOUTH GEORGIA

Falklands War commemoration; South Georgia traverse with numerous ascents; Mt. Stanley,

first ascent; quasi-crossings. In addition to the French expedition described below, the most notable climbing news was ascents of all four peaks that had been named after notable figures in the Falklands War. 2007 marked the 25th anniversary of the conflict, so it might be seen as appropriate that Sheridan Peak, Mt. Stanley, Mills Peak, and Ellerbeck Peak all received ascents.

French Alpinists Philippe Batoux, Manu Cauchy, and Lionel Daudet sailed to the island aboard *Ada 2*, skippered by the renowned French sailor Isabelle Autissier and two crew members. The team traveled along the island from northwest to southeast, using the yacht for support and repositioning between climbing and sections of sledhauling. *Ada 2* arrived at Grytviken on November 8, and on the 11th the climbing trio approached Mt. Paget (2,934m) up the Nordenskjöld Glacier. Climbing by a more direct variant of the 1995 northwest face route, all three summited on November 12, thus completing the sixth ascent of Paget, the island's highest peak. Shortly after, the three scored the first ascent of Sheridan Peak (955m). This small, sharp peak is named after Major Guy Sheridan of the Royal Marines who, on April 25, 1982, formally accepted the surrender of Argentine forces fighting on the island during the Falklands War. Sheridan himself had unsuccessfully attempted the peak in August 1999, retreating not far from the top. The French later made the third known ascent of another summit—Surprise Peak (ca 950m)—on November 18, by a 900m mixed route.

After more traversing, the team summited Mt. Worsley (1,104m), a small peak above the Esmark Glacier, via a long ridge, on December 2. Toward the end of the trip the team also attempted Mt. Sugartop (2,323m)—the only big peak aside from Paget to have had a second ascent—but retreated short of the summit in high wind and worsening weather. *Ada 2* left