

where friendly lights greet us. Argentineans, who are preparing supper, extend their hospitality. What a Christmas, guys!

ANDREA DI DONATO, *Italy, translated by Luca Calvi*

*Editor's note: In 1985 Jean Pierre Chassagne, Jean Marcel Dufour, Pierre Raveneau, and Bernard Vallet climbed a direct line through the lower face, to join the Argentinean Route, fixing rope on the lower slopes (climbed in 1966 by Fonrouge and Schonberger, as an alternate but more dangerous start to the 1954 route), and adding 14 pitches on the rock buttress (V, with a short section of A1). The next year Slovenians Milan Romih and Danilo Tic made an alpine-style ascent, creating a variation in the lower section and adding a more direct finish, through mixed ground to the ridge right of the summit.*

*Cordon del Plata, Cerro Vallecitos (5,475m), east face, De Paso...Canazo.* On September 23 Luciano Fiorenza and Pablo Pontoriero (Argentina) opened an important new route on the impressive east face of Cerro Vallecitos. They started from Salto base camp, with high winds that prevailed during the previous night stopping when they reached the face.

Initial 60° slopes led into a couloir and to small icefalls. At 5,000m, mid-height on the face, they hit the crux, a two-pitch icefall, followed by a third pitch on snow and mixed terrain. The ground above was easier, though the snow was bad. They exited onto the summit ridge via a 60° couloir and reached the central summit, which offers an impressive view of Aconcagua. They claim that this summit is the highest but traversed the exposed ridge (one 20m rappel) to the south summit. They named the route De Paso...Canazo (1,000m, MD, WI4 M3) and descended the normal route, reaching the Salto camp 14 hours after setting out.

The south summit has a cross and is the summit normally reached by other routes. The normal route to this summit is relatively popular, due to easy access, both from Mendoza (the Cordon is an hour's drive), and the standard Salto base camp, at 4,300m. The mountain is more or less snow free in high summer, there is an easy path most of the way, and there is only a short scramble to reach the top. It is therefore often the first mountain for local aspirant climbers, and the area provides excellent acclimatization before one heads to nearby Aconcagua.

MARCELO SCANU, *Argentina*

*Cordon del Plata, Cerro Plata (5,968m), east face, Falto la Gorda.* Cerro Plata is the highest summit of the Cordon del Plata and for a long time was considered to be over 6,000m. It lies south of Vallecitos, but both normal routes are generally accessed from the Salto base camp. On September 25 Rodrigo Maique and Sebastian Ruiz (Argentina) climbed a new route on the east face. They approached on the 22nd, via Quebrada de la Angostura, and thoroughly acclimatized before setting off from camp at 3:30 a.m. Climbing through scree and penitentes, they reached a couloir. Where it split, they took the left branch. (The right branch had been climbed in 1980 by Alessio and Mon.) At first the angle was 40° over iced scree, then it steepened to 55° snow and ice. They eventually emerged onto the east ridge and reached the summit, which has marvelous views northwest to Aconcagua. They descended a couloir of less than 40° to regain camp and named the route Falto la Gorda.

MARCELO SCANU, *Argentina*