

# The North American Andean Expedition 1959

LEIGH ORTENBURGER *and* DAVID L. DINGMAN

PART I: *The Quebrada Honda*

AS LATE as 1952 it could be said that there were only two or three Americans who were at all acquainted with the Cordillera Blanca of Peru. This is certainly no longer the case. In the space of seven years there have been at least eight American expeditions to that spectacular range, with the result that anyone conversant with recent mountaineering is well aware of both the major features of the range and the principal advantages of climbing there. However, it should not be thought that the Cordillera Blanca is exclusively an "American" range. Such eminent European climbers as Erwin Schneider, Lionel Terray, Raymond Lambert, Ernst Reiss, Claude Kogan, Ruedi Schatz, and Günter Hauser have all found the range a delightful place for mountaineering of the highest calibre. And we, too, have again found it so.

Our expedition was formed so late in the spring that there was scarcely sufficient time to ship our equipment to Peru. Kermith Ross, David Dingman, and I were the three members. For various reasons Dave was unable to reach Peru until the middle of the summer. At about the same time Kermith and I were also unexpectedly joined by Joe Ganci, a young climber from Arizona who found himself in Peru with a month to spare. The events of the summer showed that a three- or four-man expedition is entirely capable of dealing with Andean climbing problems. We did have the enormous advantage of two of the finest porters in Peru, Eliseo Vargas and Macario Angeles, who are fully competent on difficult snow and ice or rock terrain. Our objectives were confined to two of the major quebradas or canyons of the Cordillera Blanca: the longest canyon in the range, the Quebrada Honda, which had seen no climbing expedition since 1939, and the Quebrada Alpamayo, where we had been in 1958 at the time of Walt Bailey's tragic death. The Quebrada Honda is the route of access to four of the 6000-meter peaks of the central Cordillera Blanca: Nevado Tocllaraju, 19,790 feet; Nevado Palcaraju, 20,584 feet; Nevado Pucaranra, 20,167 feet; and Nevado Chinchey, 20,413 feet. For future expeditions there are also at least six unclimbed peaks of lower elevation in the Honda. In the Quebrada Alpamayo is found the famous Nevado Alpamayo, sometimes

referred to as "the most beautiful mountain in the world."\* Nevado Quitaraju, approximately 19,850 feet, and the highest peak in the northern Cordillera Blanca, Nevado Santa Cruz, 20,535 feet, are also reached from the Quebrada Alpamayo as are three unclimbed peaks of less than 6000 meters. Our intention was to climb as many of these peaks as possible during our eight weeks.

The beginning of the expedition was inauspicious, to say the least. At six the first evening, after a late start from the town of Marcará, we had not yet reached the "Portada," or entrance, to the Quebrada Honda. When a down-pour came during the middle of the night—I have never experienced such a heavy rain in the Cordillera Blanca—Kermith and I had at least had the foresight to have a tarp handy and so avoid being completely soaked. A more superstitious pair might have seen an omen in this, but by three A.M. the rain had stopped and I attempted to get the porters and *arrieros* started on the process of getting up, eating breakfast, finding the pack animals, pack-saddling, and finally loading them. It might seem hard to believe that these tasks required 16 man-hours, but we did not actually start until seven A.M.

The canyon itself proved a most pleasant surprise. Rather than visit it for climbing purposes, an equally valid excuse would be to see and photograph its numerous waterfalls. Yosemite is the only place I have seen which rivals the Honda for this feature—there are at least six falls of varied and exceptional beauty. By five in the evening we had passed the last of these falls and were on the final *pampa* in the uppermost Honda. In desperation we chose a base camp site just above the point where the subsidiary canyon, Quebrada Cancahua, joined the main Quebrada Honda. The next morning most of the labor of sorting our food and equipment for an attempt on Tocllaraju fell to Kermith, while I spent several hours settling with the porters the matter of their wages, the cost of the animals, and the pay for the *arrieros*. When the contract was finally signed, there was just enough time remaining to organize everything for the establishment the next day of the high camp for Tocllaraju. (First ascent by W. Brecht and H. Schweizer, 1939.—*Editor*.)

### *Tocllaraju*

The carry up through the Quebrada Cancahua also proved unexpectedly interesting and pleasant. After a beautiful *pampa* about 500 feet above

\*In mountaineering literature the altitude of Alpamayo is usually given as approximately 19,685 feet (6000 meters) or sometimes as even 20,013 feet (6100 meters). Our observations from the summit of Quitaraju with an Abney level indicate that, when its altitude is finally determined with accuracy, it will be found to be less than 6000 meters. Our calculations imply an approximate altitude of 19,600 feet for Alpamayo and 19,850 feet for Quitaraju.

the floor of the Honda and then a steep climb to the right or north of the principal glacier at the head of this small canyon, we reached an abandoned lead mine, Mina Esparta (Sparta Mine), for lunch. The name seemed particularly apt, considering what the working conditions must have been at this altitude, 16,000 feet, when the mine was in operation. Two more hours of talus hopping along the edge of the glacier put us at a good site for our Camp I, located at 16,700 feet, about 400 feet below the sharp and corniced saddle just north of our objective. The weather during the entire day had not been attractive—clouds completely obscured the summit of Tocllaraju. After staking out our tents, Kermith and I strapped on overboots and crampons to make certain that a route existed by which we could easily reach the crest of the north ridge. We kicked and chopped steps for an hour before we could be sure of getting through the usual broken icefall leading to the crest.

Since the entire ridge had never been visible, we could not judge its difficulty or length, and so the alarm for the next morning was set for three o'clock. The first few hours were relatively straightforward. Thanks to Ross's fine stepmaking, we reached the ridge quickly in excellent weather. We could now see that the ridge above consisted of fairly steep steps, almost level stretches, and some large crevasses. But by 9:30 the clouds, which were to be with us the rest of the day, returned and we could no longer tell where we were. Indeed, the day turned out to be one of the strangest that I have ever known. Earlier it had been possible to see that our ridge led almost directly to the summit, but now the complete lack of visibility—less than one rope-length—made me conclude that we should try it again the next day when perhaps the weather would be better. Kermith, however, persuaded me to go on. In spite of strong winds and a little snow, as long as we were gaining altitude, we could not be going far wrong.

Several times during the day one or the other of us would completely lose track of our position and be ready to return to camp—if we could find it. Then the other would optimistically urge that we push on. It was a strange day—not without excitement when two crevasses were explored the hard way. After a particularly steep and powdery section, at 2:40 P.M. the ridge leveled off and, sooner than we expected, there was no higher place to climb! We concluded that this must be the summit. A few minutes later we were sure of it when we were able to see down into the Quebrada Pacliash through a momentary hole in the clouds. In only five days from Huaraz we had succeeded in making the second ascent of a fine peak. We had thought this might be one of the easier of the Honda peaks, but our acclimatization had been even more rapid than expected. Three days later, with some diffi-

culty, Base Camp was moved farther up canyon to be in a better position to work on the other three high peaks surrounding the upper end of Honda.

### *Palcaraju*

On July 4 two two-man reconnaissance parties set out, first to try to locate Palcaraju and second, to try to find a suitable route. No attractive route was discovered, but the next morning we set out at eight carrying loads to establish a high camp at about 17,300 feet on the northeast ridge of Palcaraju. (First ascent by W. Brecht, S. Rohrer, H. Schweizer, and K. Schmid, 1939. —*Editor.*) At six A.M. on July 6 Kermith and I left the tent to see what type of snow, rock, and ice lay above. It took a half-hour's detour on the rock below to bypass the first mass of snow and ice. We soon reached a deep cleft in the ridge. An improbable descent to the right and a long, long step put us past this obstacle, but cost us another hour. It was 11:30 before we reached the base of the 18,700-foot north point of the ridge. After a short lunch we spent three hours working up and across the powdery and fluted east face of this point. At 3:15 when we had almost reached an apparently smooth slope presumably leading easily to the main ridge above, it was necessary for us to turn back. Although we had put in some fixed ropes over our route, we had no love for it, and so elected to try to return to camp by an alternate route which involved descending a steep rock rib to a fairly flat glacier shelf by which we thought we could reach camp. After many small misadventures we reached camp at 9:30 and spent the next day resting.

On the eighth we were off again at 3:15 A.M., ready to push to the summit. Our old high point was reached by seven o'clock. From there to the ridge crest was not the easy matter that we had supposed. Kermith did most of the exhausting work of breaking trail, struggling upward through knee, hip, and even chest-deep snow. Once on the ridge the going was somewhat better, but it never became the walk we expected. After stamping calf-deep steps to the bottom of a rather steep section, I chopped some 300 feet of steps up to what I had thought would be the summit plateau. Wearing ourselves out stamping more steps now in knee-deep snow, we finally reached what we expected to be the summit. Only then were we able to see that the true summit lay several hundred yards to the southwest and our "summit" was about 300 feet below the top. Too exhausted from the endless step-making to try the last bit at three P.M., we wearily retraced our steps.

Our headlights, powered by the new extra-long-life batteries, were as essential that night in getting us back to camp as they had been early that morning when our climb had begun. Throughout the summer they helped us to avoid dangerous bivouacs. For the Cordillera Blanca, at least, these

lights are far the best solution to the long climbs which require more than a day from the highest camp. In this case we did not reach camp until 1:15 A.M., 22 hours after starting.

### *Chinchey*

After our return to Base Camp and a day of rest, the carry to the Chinchey-Pucaranra saddle began. Immediately above Base Camp was a beautiful lake, Pucaranra-kocha, one of many in the Cordillera Blanca. But this one was difficult to pass. On one side the rock walls of the canyon descended vertically to the water; on the other a very steep dirt slope overgrown with tall grass, bushes, and small trees blocks the way. The loads, especially those of the porters, were so heavy that we managed to reach only the base of the last bare rock section in the middle of the glacier which leads to the saddle. The usual "hoosh" was eaten that night with no clear plan for the morrow. The icefall to the left looked dangerous and the route onto the rock section was completely blocked by the highest and steepest slope of morainal dirt I have ever seen. However, in the morning I tried my hand at cutting steps in dirt with an ice axe! As it turned out, this was by far the best route to have chosen, because from the top of the dirt it was clear that the rest of the route to the saddle would not be too difficult. Eliseo and I broke trail to the saddle, while Kermith and Macario went back to camp to bring up another set of loads for establishing Camp II on the saddle.

After dumping our loads at the saddle, we waited for more than two hours for the other two, who were scheduled to meet us there. Concerned over their safety, we climbed down and finally found them at the top of the rock. Because Macario found the insecurity of the dirt steps not to his liking, Kermith had to make four carries over this section. It was now much too late to continue on to the saddle, so Kermith and I camped there at the top of the rock while the porters returned to our first camp below the dirt slope. As all of our food was lying on the saddle, we made supper and breakfast from one can of tuna, some Bovril, and tea. Weak from hunger when we reached the saddle at noon the next day, we gorged ourselves.

The next morning, July 14, we were off at 5:45 A.M. for Chinchey. (First ascent by W. Brecht and H. Schweizer, 1939.—*Editor*.) There were no great difficulties on the whole climb. To reach the summit ridge did necessitate chopping a step-ladder up the one steep section for seven rope-lengths, but the snow was good. The north and south summits are usually separated by a cleft of 60 feet or so. A Scottish party making the second ascent in 1958 experienced some difficulty in this place, but our climb was earlier in the season and we easily crossed and reached the summit by two o'clock. An

hour was spent on top enjoying the view which, like that from almost all the summits of the Cordillera Blanca, is magnificent! Nevados Tulparaju and Cayesh, two prominent unclimbed towers, were now over 1400 feet below and did not look impossible. The entire Cordillera Huayhuash could be seen very clearly.

### *Pucaranra*

Pucaranra (First ascent by B. Lauterburg, F. Marmillod, R. Schmid, and F. Sigrist, 1948.—*Editor*), the other peak rising from the saddle, was our objective after two days of rest enforced by a terrific gale. The route by which this fine peak had been climbed three times was from the southwest, from the Quebrada Quilcayhuanca. At six o'clock on the 17th we started our attempt on the northeast ridge. This is a very sharp ridge, part rock, part snow, and part ice, which descends steeply to the north of the saddle. After crossing the flat glacier, we gained the crest of the ridge by traversing out and upward on a snow-covered ledge. This would have been nothing but a walk if the snow had been hard; because it was powdery, the climb was a slippery struggle. We removed our crampons a couple of rope lengths up the ridge. After a short, difficult chimney, we reached a long section of slabs where we were able to move along quickly together. A prominent gendarme, seen from below, seemed to be one of the major problems of the ridge. A careful inspection with a telescope from our camp had indicated that it must be turned on the right if at all. We tried this, but I was stopped short on the brink of a great precipice. I had almost given up hope of completing the climb. With no real expectation of finding a route, we then tried the left side of the gendarme and found that this route led to the snow-covered rocks of the notch. To reach the far side of the notch required a touchy lead skittering across snow perhaps two or three inches deep on *very* steep slabs. After belaying Kermith across (it was probably more dangerous for him than for me), I looked up at the vertical rock pitch, above which proved to be the key to the entire climb. The altitude here was about 19,500 feet. This pitch was one of those beautiful leads which one finds so rarely, especially on great mountains—almost vertical yet with just enough holds. It was clear that on descent we would have to rappel down this. Lunch was eaten rapidly after one further rope-length. Crampons soon became essential again to reach and pass the ice in the band of yellow rocks. It was now late in the afternoon and fatigue was beginning to creep up on us, but the route-finding difficulties were now behind. The very steep, hard snow and ice ridge led directly to the summit. At six o'clock, after three more hours of step cutting, we pulled ourselves up onto the summit.

The Andean sun was setting and the alpenglow on Huantsán, Huascarán, and Huandoy recalled adventures of previous years. The blue emptiness, gradually at first, then rapidly, filled the valleys and finally even the highest canyons. I had hoped to capture the beauty with my camera, but the combination of frozen gloves and fatigue placed the thoughts of descent uppermost in my mind. If one were but a trifle stronger. . . .

We belayed each other down the steps as rapidly as safety permitted, but the darkness was complete by the time we reached the yellow rock section. The rest of the descent was carefully made with the wonderful help of the headlights, but there were sufficient difficulties to prevent our reaching the saddle until a few minutes before six A.M. Then, with our headlights flashing mysteriously back and forth, it took us full 15 minutes to find our tent! Once inside, we thought of food, of the fine climb, but even more of getting quickly to sleep, as it had now been over 24 hours since we had left the tent! The climb had been one of our best and we slept the sleep of the satisfied—but only for a little more than two hours, for Ross was working on the Primus stove by nine. Macario soon arrived, ready to carry our camp down to the rocks. It required all our will power to break camp and begin the downhill slog, but by one o'clock we were on our way. The bottom of the rocks were reached by five P.M. Eliseo met us there and suggested that we continue to Base Camp. Looking back, I cannot imagine how we found the strength and resolution to do it, but we agreed to go on. Kermith then had a chance to see how these fine porters perform. Eliseo carried two full Army duffel bags on his packboard. It was one of the largest loads I have ever seen anyone carry over difficult terrain—especially at night.

After reaching Base Camp, more nearly dead than alive, at nine in the evening, we met Dave Dingman for the first time and spent the next two and one-half hours eating and talking—although I suspect a bit incoherently. Only 15 hours before, we had been standing on the summit of Pucaranra! Little did I suspect that only 28 hours later I would be down in the town of Chancos again.

L. O.

## PART II: *The Quebrada Alpamayo*

My arrival at the high altitude Quebrada Honda was so dramatically unsuccessful that I will start by describing this infamous beginning. Having survived the motor trip from Lima with only one head-on collision, I arrived in Huaraz on July 14, where I was met at the village square by Juan Manuel Ramírez. In Juan's house I was introduced to Eliseo Vargas, who had come down from Base Camp to accompany me up the Quebrada Honda.

Eliseo and I started up the quebrada on the afternoon of July 15. We

arrived at Base Camp at three o'clock P.M. the next day to find the camp empty. Since Leigh, Kermith, and Macario had not returned by the following morning, I took the opportunity to hike up to the abandoned mine at approximately 16,000 feet. Feeling no undue effects from the altitude there, I was anxious to move on up. The next morning despite my severe headache, Eliseo and I readied our equipment to climb to the Chinchey saddle. While crossing a stream just below Pucaranra-kocha, I slipped off a rock and had enough of a ducking to evoke a loud belly laugh from Eliseo. This laughter upset his balance and he made an exact repetition of my performance when he attempted to cross. We laughed in harmony while emptying our boots, our first successful communication without the use of a dictionary. Beyond the lake, we started up the glacier. By now my headache was debilitating and I was feeling unusually weak. Having spotted the others descending the glacier above, I returned to Base Camp, but Eliseo continued on to assist in the heavy and difficult downward carry. Kermith and Leigh, accompanied by the porters with prodigious packs, arrived at Base Camp about nine o'clock P.M. The next day we rested, but I was no better and had a cough of increasing severity. By late afternoon I was sufficiently worried about my health to examine myself with a stethoscope with alarming results. At five I injected myself with penicillin and cardiac drugs and we decided to leave immediately for lower altitudes. I would ride a horse and Leigh and Eliseo would accompany me on foot. We left at six that evening, leaving Kermith and Macario to bring down the camp, thus spoiling our hopes for an attempt on the beautiful, unclimbed peak, Nevado Uta. Except for one stop for more intravenous self-injections of drugs, our strange caravan traveled continuously throughout the night until we reached Chancos at 2:30 A.M. Since my symptoms had almost completely disappeared by this time, we elected to spend the rest of the night at Chancos and made the remainder of the journey out to Huaraz in leisurely fashion the following day. My escape from this potentially dangerous situation can be laid to two things: the appropriate use of several drugs and the rapid evacuation to lower altitudes. Leigh's initiative in this evacuation called for a Herculean effort on his part, since he had had only one night's rest following the strenuous activities at high altitude.

After Leigh and I had rested four days in Huaraz, Kermith and Macario arrived with all gear from the Quebrada Honda. On July 24 I made a rapid hike from 10,000 feet to 16,000 feet, which convinced me that I had completely recovered.

### *Alpamayo*

The evening of July 26 found the six of us (we had now been joined by



Joe Ganci) at Hacienda Colcas ready to start for the Quebrada Alpamayo. The first two days were difficult because we had to cross two 16,000-foot passes before dropping into the quebrada. Early on the third day we rounded a bend in the canyon to gain our first view of Alpamayo. (First ascent by G. Hauser, B. Huhn, H. Wiedmann, and F. Knauss, 1957.—*Editor.*) Despite the often repeated praise for the beauty of this mountain, we were overwhelmed by the splendor of that first glimpse. Arrival at the site of the 1958 Base Camp at 11:30 A.M. allowed us plenty of time to secure our camp before nightfall. The next morning Leigh and I left with the porters for the carry up to Camp I. Joe and Kermith remained at Base Camp because of minor intestinal problems. After spending a few moments at Walt Bailey's cairn, we arrived at Camp I and found the tent platform in good shape from the year before. Leigh and I left camp at seven the next morning to find a route to the base of the mountain through a complicated icefall which required fixed ropes. We found a good tent platform just below the south shoulder of Alpamayo at about 18,470 feet. After a rapid descent to Camp I, we found Kermith, Joe and the porters who had brought up additional loads. On August 1 all of us carried relatively heavy packs through the icefall and established Camp II. Next day Leigh and I started climbing on the base of the south shoulder of Alpamayo. Although the climbing was very high angle, the snow was firm. On attaining the top of the shoulder, we got our first taste of the unfavorable snow conditions which eventually would cause our failure. We traversed the top of the shoulder and started up the south ridge in a trench plowed through hip-deep, very soft snow. Eight hours later but less than 500 vertical feet higher we turned back, leaving fixed ropes, as our strategy was to prepare the route to an altitude which would allow two men to make a summit dash without the need of either a higher camp or a dangerous bivouac. The next day Kermith and Leigh pushed the route to within a hundred meters of the summit, while I stayed in camp to take movies. Kermith and I took our turn the next morning, but at the end of a slow day we had advanced only one rope length farther. That entire second section of the route required fixed ropes. After deciding it was now possible to reach the summit in one long day, we rested on August 5. Kermith had to leave to return to California early the next morning.

After a two o'clock start by the light of headlamps on the morning of August 6, Leigh and I reached the top of the fixed rope just before daybreak. We cut across a very thin, powdery knife edge as the sun rose. The darkness had helped for once. Looking back at this pitch, we concluded that we would not have done it in the daylight. Leigh disappeared around a

corner. A quick shout: "Hang on, Dave. One crampon is off." After an anxious pause, the rope again moved through my belay. Leigh's crampon had slipped off in a vertical ice chimney which I found hideously difficult, even with all my equipment intact. How was Leigh ever able to replace his crampon? Though the deep, high angle, powdery snow rarely allowed a solid belay or the use of iron, we continued upward.

We finally were confronted with a large bulge of snow above us. As it was impossible to pass on either side, we would have to go over it. My belay position consisted of a notch cut in the soft snow of the ridge with my left leg dangling into Quebrada Alpamayo and my right into Quebrada Santa Cruz, where the pure mechanics of keeping myself on the mountain left little time to think about a belay. From above Leigh suggested that he might need a belay. I lost no time in assuring him that this was impossible. The objective dangers presented us by the snow conditions made the possibility of a fall very real and a fall for one of us would mean disaster for both. To abandon a further attempt less than 100 feet from the summit was an extremely hard decision. Our decision was a sane one, for we did not reach the top of the fixed rope until the sun set. Shortly thereafter a snow storm began to obliterate many of our steps and make the descent generally unpleasant. When we arrived back at camp at nine P.M., we learned that Kermith had left for Huaraz. Having seen us very near the summit, he concluded that we had been successful. When we reached Base Camp several days later we found a note congratulating us on the ascent.

### *Quitaraju*

After a rest day, Joe, Leigh, and I left at four A.M. for Nevado Quitaraju. (First ascent by A. Awerzger and E. Schneider, 1936.—*Editor.*) Because of the tremendous physical output Leigh had made on Alpamayo, I elected to lead this climb. Attacking the mountain from the north, we found very good snow conditions unlike those on the shaded southern slopes. This was the clearest climbing weather we had had in this quebrada and it was not until our route joined the northwest ridge at about 19,500 feet that the first wispy clouds began to drift by. We encountered some soft snow at approximately eleven o'clock and because I was beginning to get a little tired, Leigh did the last two leads to put us on top at 11:30. We had magnificent weather for our hour and a quarter summit halt, taking instrument readings and photographs. As we prepared to leave, we saw a lone figure ascend the glacier to Camp II far below us and shortly thereafter begin the descent. We sensed trouble. On reaching the tent at nightfall, we found a note from Macario. He would bring Eliseo, who was sick and having difficulty breathing, up to

Camp I the following morning for me to examine. Macario arrived at high camp next morning, having left Eliseo at Camp I. I started down ahead of the others and met the sick porter at the bottom of the icefall. He was in good spirits and without a temperature, but complained of difficulty in breathing. Eliseo descended to Base Camp very slowly, but insisted on carrying a light pack. A more thorough examination revealed that his only difficulty was a slight touch of pleurisy and he was fit again after codeine and a day's rest.

### *Santa Cruz*

There was much work to be done in Base Camp on August 10 in preparation for the next day's departure for Nevado Santa Cruz. (First ascent by F. Marmillo and A. Szepessy, 1948.—*Editor.*) We spent most of the day packing food and preparing loads for the higher camp which allowed us much less rest than we had hoped for. A large icefall guards the eastern approaches of Santa Cruz's north ridge, the first 500 feet of which are rock. It was our plan to place the only high camp at 18,050 feet, above the icefall at the base of the rocks, higher than the 1958 camp. During a long day in which we ascended 4500 feet, Leigh managed to find a good route through the right side of the icefall. After helping us set up camp, the porters descended to be able to make another carry the next day. Since by morning I was having some trouble with pleurisy myself, Joe and Leigh left the tent at 6:30 to prepare the first part of the ridge with fixed ropes. The porters arrived in the afternoon after making another tremendous carry completely on their own. Leigh and Joe returned late and reported the lower portion ready for a summit push. We spent the next day resting and building up steam for the anticipated long summit day. Leaving the tent at 2:30 A.M. on August 14, we were at the top of the rocks by daybreak. Several swings of the axe would produce a fine step in the ideal snow of the north ridge and the shaft belays were very solid. Fearing cornices on the crest of the ridge, we stayed well below on the eastern slope, which offered tremendous exposure. The climbing did not vary much, and we continued along until early afternoon, expecting at any time to see the summit. About 3:00 P.M. the first clouds rising from the low lands to the east engulfed us, causing concern about the hour. Almost immediately the ridge flattened and gave the impression that we must be very near the summit. We groped along the edge of a large and apparently impassible crevasse where the Swiss had bivouacked in 1948. Luckily a short break in the clouds revealed a thin but adequate snow bridge to the right. We climbed upward to another flat platform which we were sure must be the summit. Another momentary break

in the clouds revealed a delightful surprise. The actual summit was a sharp pointed pyramid of almost perfect dimensions rising about 40 feet above us. We scrambled up and were on top at 4:30 P.M., but the increasing snowfall counseled a short stay there. After a much longer descent than we had hoped for, we crawled into the tent at 1:30 A.M. after 23 hours of climbing. The next morning a strange view greeted us: cloudy valleys but brilliant sun above. Our porters, always enthusiastic about our achievements, had seen us near the summit of Santa Cruz and had lighted the brush in celebration of this event and the fire had spread over acres. On returning to Base Camp we all celebrated enthusiastically with a pachamanca (a meal cooked by burying the food with red hot stones), prepared by the porters, and a bottle of pisco supplied by Joe.

We had climbed five peaks over 6000 meters and only narrowly missed on two others. Leigh's knowledge of the range, his fine leadership, the faithful services of two of the finest porters in Peru, and last but not least the general harmony among the expedition members all contributed to the success of the 1959 North American Andean Expedition. We had many opportunities to laugh, which is the best method of stimulating one's appetite for the hard work involved in high ascents. D. L. D.

#### *Summary of Statistics*

AREA: Cordillera Blanca, Peru.

#### **Ascents:**

Tocllaraju, 19,790 feet, June 30, 1959 (Ortenburger, Ross)—second ascent.

Chinchey, 20,413 feet, July 14, 1959 (Ortenburger, Ross)—third ascent.

Pucaranra, 20,167 feet, July 17, 1959 (Ortenburger, Ross)—fourth ascent, new route (northeast ridge).

Loyacjirca, ca. 18,350 feet, August 2, 1959 (Ross, Ganci)—second ascent.

Quitaraju, ca. 19,850 feet, August 9, 1959 (Ortenburger, Dingman, Ganci)—third ascent.

Santa Cruz, 20,535 feet, August 14, 1959. (Ortenburger, Dingman, Ganci)—second ascent.

#### **Attempted Ascents:**

Palcaraju, 20,584 feet, July 8, 1959 (Ortenburger, Ross)—to 20,250 feet.

Alpamayo, ca. 19,600 feet, August 6, 1959 (Ortenburger, Dingman)—to 19,500 feet.

PERSONNEL: Leigh Ortenburger, Kermith Ross, David L. Dingman, Joseph Ganci, Macario Angeles, Eliseo Vargas.