

SOUTH AMERICA

Colombia

Pico Colón, Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. After a seven-day approach march up the Donachuí valley and a bivouac, on February 22 four Peace Corps Volunteers, Paul Feyling, Jerry Vonnahme, Ed Lightfoot and Charles Kaska, and Dana Hathaway reached the summit of Pico Colón (18,947 feet), following basically the original Cabot route.

Nevado del Huila, Cordillera Central. This glacier-crowned massif of four peaks has been little known since ascents of two summits in 1939 and 1944 because of relative inaccessibility by road and the threat of bandits. With local advice that these conditions had improved a U. S.-Colombian party left Cali on February 11, 1969, consisting of Guillermo Cajiao, Rafael Holguin, and Francisco Jose Magaña, of Cali and Santander; Robert W. Mason, Arthur Wilder and me, of Washington, D. C., and Paul A. Feyling, a Peace Corps Volunteer. Following a 100-mile drive over winding, unpaved roads from the Pan American Highway near Popoyán, we reached Señor Holguin's farm, beyond Toez in the valley of the Río Páez, immediately below the west slopes of the Huila, and here we hired eight porters. The next day we entered a path opened for us through dense cloud forest (from 9500 to 11,500 feet) along a tributary stream, Río Verdun. Halfway through the second day we entered the *páramo*, an Andean answer to muskeg, and on the third day, above 13,000 feet, reached moss-carpeted higher slopes within sight of glacier termini. Previous aerial reconnaissance suggested what we subsequently found, that a broad amphitheater below the northern three peaks offers the best approach from this side. But we reached a glacier several miles further north. An end to the three months of good weather usual for December through February and respiratory complaints limited us to one attempt, in which we ascended the west slopes of the North Peak. We reached a height from which descent into the amphitheater was barred by steep slopes. From a camp at about 17,000 feet we followed a spur to its crest just below the summit platform where the attempt was abandoned when one of our party was overcome by exhaustion. The snow mantle of the Central Peak, third from the north in the group and its highest, is pierced by about five fumaroles which smoke constantly and one emits a loud whistling noise. The mountain is composed of steep ice masses above broad expanses of active glaciers which present route-finding problems. Its general aspect is an extended crest in contrast to the typical conical form usually associated with volcanoes. A report is available from the Museo Departamental de Historia Natural, Dr. Carlos Lehmann, Director, Apartado Nal. 938, Cali, Colombia.

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