

Tumarinaraju, Milpocraju, Tsurup

H. ADAMS CARTER with sections by David Peterson, Ronald E. Fear
and William Lahr

THE donkey drivers were only a little more reluctant than the donkeys themselves to attack that last steep thousand feet to Base Camp. We¹ had left Huántar, that story-book town on the Atlantic slope of the Cordillera Blanca, early that morning. All day we had kept moving up the Quebrada Carhuascancha. By early afternoon we had left behind the last potato patch, scratched out of a steep island in the rocky soil. Not much higher we saw the last sheep, tended by tiny girls in scarlet and emerald skirts. The narrow valley swung left to frame Tumarinaraju, "the peak around the corner" in Quechua. Then came into view massive Huantsán on the left of it, and graceful San Juan and the three spikes of the Cayesh group on the right. Alpine meadows, a rugged crossing of the mountain torrent and now the final slope. We dragged ourselves up to our miniscule 14,500-foot *pampa*, little caring about the carpet of wild flowers. After a breather and a cup of tea we were better able to enjoy the beauty of our Base Camp site.

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Tumarinaraju. The route to Camp I dipped down to the turquoise waters of Maparajucocha, then climbed treacherously steep grass slopes on the far side, past a lovely little lake which washed the tongue of the glacier and up onto the ice. We set up Camp I's tents on the lowest permanent snow above the bare ice. Then steep snow led to the icefall, above which we pitched Camp II, just below Tumarinaraju's east ridge. From there we had two choices: the steep, snowy south ridge, which rose above the Tumarinaraju-Huantsán col, and the formidable rock and snow east ridge. We chose the former for our first attempt.²

On July 1 the crew set out for the south ridge in resplendent sunshine. We should have read the weather signs better as we traversed, since a long banner cloud hung off the summit of Huantsán. Just below the col between Tumarinaraju and a needle on the south ridge, the angle steep-

¹ Ron Fear, John Gross, Bill Lahr, Dave Peterson, Ben Steele, Alan Watson, and Ann and Ad Carter.

² This south ridge had been attempted in 1966 by David Bathgate, John Ricker, Lisle Irwin and Terry Burnell who found an approach from the west impractical. (*A.A.J.*, 1968, 16:1, p. 193.)

ened suddenly. Dave Peterson first climbed the rope we had fixed the day before onto the ridge crest, followed by Ron Fear. As I poked my head above the crest, the gale snatched my goggles from my head. Luckily I caught them as they flew past but I watched the supplementary lenses float out into space. We cowered from the hurricane while Alan Watson joined us. This was no place for the whole party. Those three would fight the blast while I accompanied the rest back to Camp II to wait in support.

For several hours they struggled against the wind on knife-edges, teetered across cornices that hung way out on both sides of the ridge and front-pointed up 65° steps. By mid-afternoon the summit seemed in their grasp. Then the disillusionment! The summit block was a fifty-foot, sharply overhanging, rime-covered mushroom of ice. There was no way up!—H.A.C.

Dave Peterson describes the actual ascent. The next day we tackled the "formidable" east ridge, scene of no previous attempt and extending forever above into the endless blue. The others left ahead of us. An hour later, when Ron Fear and I finally dragged ourselves out of bed, the four of them were small dots against the expansive white. By noon we had caught up to them while they were having lunch and we all studied the route ahead. The next lead was up the "Snow Man," up his steep left leg to his belt of ice-covered rock and thence to a firm belay under his chin. His head, the second lead, seemed to be a great scimitar of rock rising a full 150 feet and placed perfectly in the center of the ridge. This barrier we elected to pass on the south. Two hours later, after 150 feet of unprotected snow, rock and ice conglomerate with a 2000-foot bomb-bay dropout, still in the shadow of the mountain we broke through the final crest of snow to a superb belay ledge and an awe-inspiring view of the north side of the cleaver; had we chosen the other side of the cleaver, it would have been fourth-class ledges all the way to where we had just appeared! Ah well, it had been a good lead! The next lead started with a chimney between rock and ice for fifty feet, then shifted into high gear with another fifty feet of nerve-wracking rock, only to end with fifty feet of honeycombed ice which held no protection and exploded under the slightest pressure. At this point we had to retreat as it was getting dark. A 400-foot rappel on ¼-inch line which stretched to ⅛-inch left us with sore shoulders and rears at the top of a huge bergschrund, filled with snow and pipe-organ icicles. Our rappel over the schrund wiped out the pipe organ. We laughed and joked all the way back to camp, for we knew we had the mountain conquered.

The next morning, July 3, we returned to the lip of the bergschrund where our fixed rope of the day before remained. After jūmaring out the slack in this seemingly endless piece of elastic spaghetti, we decided that jūmaring over the lip of the schrund was not worth the effort. Instead

we outflanked the obstacle and attacked it at its weakest point. After several hundred feet of snow flutes, we reached our previous day's "superb belay ledge", jumared up 150 feet of Edelrid to our previous high point. Steep snow and ice followed. Then we traversed a gentle snow ramp to the base of the final difficulty. One at a time we climbed the steep, snowy stairway to heaven, while the other belayed in bottomless powder snow at the end of the ramp. The summit was reached at 4:12 P.M. with a clear sky, deepening shadows and fading sunset light.—D.P.

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Milpocraju's ascent is described by Ron Fear. Tumarinaraju was behind us, a great climb! Then came the *patsamanca*, the terrific feast, in which we ate a whole sheep, potatoes and *ocas*, roasted Peruvian-style in an oven of hot stones covered with dirt. As we gorged ourselves, we looked up at the three prongs of the Cayesh group. The nearest, Milpocraju, rose towering from another lake just above Base Camp, whose underground drainage gave it its Quechua name, Milpoccocha, "the lake without an outlet." Earlier, bathing in the lake, I had privately decided to climb that elegant snow spire. Reconnaissance as we climbed Jatungarabanzu convinced us all. We could do its east ridge in one long day from Base Camp.

Ben Steele and I started out with Ad Carter and Peruvian porter, Glicerio Henostroza, for the peak. In an hour or so as we were putting on crampons and roping up, the weather suddenly took on a menacing look. The change was so rapid that it needed little persuasion for us to return to Base Camp and postpone the climb a day or so. Three days of rain confined us to our tents, where to tell the truth we enjoyed the shelter, our books and each other's company.

The rain stopped on the afternoon of July 11 and the warm sunshine made us all restless. Alan Watson and Bill Lahr now wanted to join us on the climb.

Ad and Ann had breakfast ready early. Within an hour Ben and I had reached our cache at the edge of the glacier. Alan, Bill, Ad and the porters, Marcelino Vargas and Lucio Bustamante, were close behind. After climbing obvious avalanche slopes for an hour, Ad and the porters branched off to climb Milpocraju Chico. From the summit they had grandstand seats for our climb and a unique chance to take pictures.

We still had a way to go to reach the ridge. Ben took the lead up steep snow. The second pitch started on a flimsy, lattice-like double cornice where snow kicked off the left side often emerged underneath and fell down the right. I crossed a rock band to ice, where I placed a picket. We moved up and to the right to a cornice. Ben's lead was steep and then I got another double cornice. Holding my breath, I walked cautiously across the ridge and got a picket into solid snow beyond.

Another rock band and more steep snow. My last lead was swimming up nearly perpendicular new snow on the south side—waist deep—what a last lead! Ben led up to the pointed top, riding the ridge like a horse. Alan and Bill followed shortly. It was thirteen hours after leaving before we were back at Base.—R.E.F.

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The main expedition was over. Ron Fear and Bill Lahr climbed Huascarán and Chopicalqui but the magnet of something new was pulling hard.

*Tsurup (Churup)*³—the Southwest Face as described by Bill Lahr. After starting the season on the far eastern side of the cordillera, Ron Fear and I wanted something within “commuting distance” from town but technically interesting. We had teamed up with Rick Ridgeway and Michiel Malotaux, who were of a similar frame of mind. With these thoughts, we went no farther than the Nevado Tsurup (18,022 feet), easily visible from the market place in Huaraz, which it looks down on with the visage of a large fan. Its nearness and illusion of size, accentuated by the lack of foothills, belie its relatively modest height. It was climbed in 1962 by the Japanese Inoguchi and Yoshikawa, who ascended the south ridge. Its discouragingly long ridges made us immediately fascinated with the fluted southwest snow-and-ice face. Tsurup is now an easy commute from town since the construction of the Huaraz-Pucallpa road as far as the entrance to the Quebrada Quilcayhuanca. There is even a construction hut at that point so that the weary climber can recover from the bumpy one-hour truck ride from town without the need to make camp.

A day of reconnaissance finally eliminated the ridge routes, but we failed to discover an obvious way down other than the south ridge to the right of the face, an endless rollercoaster. Among the unexpected dividends of the day’s excursion was the discovery of a campsite beside a spectacularly beautiful Andean lake, apparently bottomless and of a dark turquoise, guarded on the southeast by a 350-foot rock wall. Our route would start across a moraine and the glacier; then the 1600-foot face commences at an opening in a rockband; the route would angle up to the left and finally emerge onto the fluted wall. It would join the left (west) ridge just to the right of an enormous cornice which casts a shadow over the upper half of the fluted portion of the face. It would terminate at the summit, another 800 feet up the ridge.

Our final hitch-hike did not begin until five P.M. Next day we slept until late in the morning and basked in the sun in hopes that the three-

³ The proper pronunciation of this peak is clearly Tsurup although the excellent Austrian Alpine Club map gives “Churup”. In Quechua “tsurup” means “barren, unproductive”.

hour stroll to the lake would consume the whole day. It was delightful not to be en route up another long *quebrada*, wondering why good things are always at the *end* of the valley. I was particularly skeptical about the route. We all wondered about the snow conditions on the upper face among the flutes. It faced perhaps more south than west, which can mean bottomless powder snow.

Five o'clock the next morning found us sleepily staggering through the fog across the rockfall, seven o'clock on the glacier and nine at the face. The next 150 feet of ice and rock took two more hours. Ron struggled upwards searching for purchase for pickets and screws. The nearly vertical ice over rock varied in thickness from two to six inches. It yielded irregularly to ice screws. Only at the start did the snow offer a spot for pickets. The pitches became progressively more difficult for those who followed because of the steady erosion of the snow bridge leading off the glacier onto the wall. It was cheerless work still so close to our jumping-off point. Our only diversion had been watching Rick retie a strapless crampon from a mid-air position.

The second pitch on 60° hard snow led to the left under a protruding vertical rock. From our position at the end of the pitch we could see the fluted face. We even felt somewhat optimistic by the time we got onto the flutes at the end of the third lead. "We'll be on the ridge in a couple of hours," we all thought. Halfway up the 1300-foot 55° slope of flutes, however, we fell into the shadow of the enormous cornice, which transformed the tolerably firm snow face into a series of chutes down which poured inexhaustable talcum-powder-dry snow. From there on we progressed only by excavating a chimney route between the flutes and working up between the deeply set foundations of the flutes. It was not until nightfall that we huddled in gathering clouds and lightning on the ridge top slightly above the cornice.

Rick led into the moonless blackness, unassisted by headlamps (both malfunctioned). The only consolation was that we could not sense the exposure on the knife-edge ridge. One hard snow pitch required front-pointing in prayer position.

The summit appeared underfoot at 9:30 P.M. After at most sixty seconds of silent meditation, we proceeded down the south ridge. That route led along the confluence of rock and snow and was as sheer as the ridge we had come up. Soon, as the moon began to emerge, the landscape to the east loomed up indistinctly in the receding cloudiness. We groped over disheartening drop-offs of ice, rock and snow on automatic pilot. A long stretch of snow-paved superhighway came to a dead end at the foot of an enormous gendarme. I suggested an exit off the back and led a moderately reluctant crew to the east down a field of *penitentes* onto rock and up to a hideously steep wall. The back side had not appeared a possible retreat from the reconnaissance. Unanimously we settled into a shivery bivouac under clear skies. The watch read three

o'clock and the altimeter 17,000 feet. By mid-morning we found a three-pitch escape off the wall. The trek down much scree and around the mountain put us in the sack at six P.M. after thirty-eight hours on the climb.—W.L.

Summary of Statistics:

AREA: Cordillera Blanca, Peru.

ASCENTS: Tumarinaraju, 18,603 feet, first ascent, July 3, 1972 (Fear, Peterson); July 4, 1972 (Lahr, Steele).

Maparaju, 17,474 feet, new route from southeast via San Juan col, July 4, 1972 (Gross, Henostroza, Watson).

Jatungarabanzu, 16,591 feet, second ascent, July 7, 1972 (Carter, Fear, Lahr, Steele, Watson, Bustamante, Henostroza, Vargas).

Milpocraju, 17,717 feet, first ascent July 12, 1972 (Fear, Lahr, Steele, Watson).

Milpocraju Chico 17,061 feet, second ascent, July 12, 1972 (Carter, Bustamante, Vargas).

Tsurup (Churup), 18,022 feet, new route via southwest face, c. August 15, 1972 (Fear, Lahr, Malotaux, Ridgeway).

PERSONNEL: H. Adams Carter, Ann B. Carter, Ronald E. Fear, John Gross, William Lahr, David Peterson, Benjamin Steele, Alan Watson; Peruvians Glicerio Henostroza, Lucio Bustamante, Marcelino Vargas, Rómulo Aranda; for Tsurup only Richard Ridgeway, Netherlander Michiel Malotaux.