

for three pitches to its end. The two final pitches on the north-northwest face led through cornices to the ridge just west of the summit (18,012 feet). This face is never in the sunlight and in certain parts we encountered very steep unconsolidated sugar snow.

WILLIAM MCKINNEY

Venezuela

Sierra Nevada de Mérida. A stay in Mérida revealed that the long active Club Andino Venezolano has been disbanded. Presently there are three small clubs in the city. The most active seems to be Club Cóndor, Carlos Reyes, Presidente, Calle 24 #8-259, Mérida. There are also clubs centered in Caracas. Permission to hike or climb in the Sierra must be obtained from the Headquarters of the Parque Nacional Sierra Nevada and from the Comisión Regional de Defensa Civil. The refugio Pico Espejo, near the upper terminal of the *teleférico* (4765 m.), was falling into ruins, but still may provide some shelter. It was built in 1955. I was there in March, and made a solo ascent of Pico Bolívar (5007 meters, 16,427 feet) by the Garganta Bourgoin route. There has been a major contribution to the scant literature of Venezuelan mountaineering:

Nieves y Riscos Merideños by R.A. Romero Muñoz-Tebar (Caracas, 1976). Along with Carlos Chalbaud's *Expediciones a la Sierra Nevada de Mérida* (Caracas, 1959), this is one of the best sources of information on the history and routes of the Mérida peaks.

PIETER CROW, *Green Mountain Club*

Cerro Autana. In early November Jim Donini, Mike Graber, Beverly Johnson, and I established a new route on Cerro Autana deep in the Venezuelan jungle. We were accompanied by an ABC TV film crew of Mike Hoover, Peter Pilafian and Don Burgess. The expedition started months earlier when I was researching the so-called Guyana Shield—or Roraima Formation—looking for a rock tower suitable for climbing. The Shield is peppered with strange “Lost World” mesa towers and plateaus rising above the jungle floor. Eventually I located a suitable objective—Autana, a 2000-foot-high quartzite tower that looks like a giant tree stump. After searching for some pals willing to thrash about in the jungle, and obtaining backing from ABC, we flew to Caracas, and then to the jungle outpost of Puerto Ayacucho. Far and away the most enjoyable part of the expedition was the three days of navigating, in dug-outs, the rivers Orinoco, Sipapo, Autana, and Manteca. One more day hacking jungle brought us to the mountain's base. We chose a route on the west face that led directly to mysterious caves 400 feet below the summit. Our Indian guides warned us a dinosaur lived in the cave. Six days of climbing, much of it artificial aid on steep, sometimes over-