

above Hotel Ledge, this ascends up and right for four pitches of excellent face climbing. While these climbs are the only significant new development on El Gran Trono Blanco in the past decade, there continues to be sporadic activity on the granite domes of the Cañón del Tajo area. There are perhaps 300 routes from 50 to 300 feet high.

JOHN SMALLWOOD, *Unaffiliated*

SOUTH AMERICA

Venezuela

El León, North Face, 1989-90. The Sierra de la Culata, which runs roughly east and west, lies north of the Andean city of Mérida. It contains the largest number of 4000-meter peaks in Venezuela. On December 11, 1989, I climbed solo Pico Mina de Hierro (4582 meters, 15,033 feet). This is located in the eastern third of the range. It was apparently a first ascent. In January 1990, Isabel Suárez and I climbed the north face of Pico El León (4746 meters, 15,572 feet), a new route. Its access is made difficult by dense vegetation on the middle slopes. The peak may be seen from the streets of Mérida.

JOSÉ BETANCOURT, *Mérida, Venezuela*

Salto del Angel. Three routes have now been climbed beside the Angel Falls, possibly the highest waterfall in the world, which drops some 2800 feet. In March, Spaniards climbed a new route 100 meters to the left of the falls. Nearly all the face was overhanging and 80% of the climbing was direct aid, mostly A3 with two pitches of A4. Yet they placed only one bolt. Jesús Gálvez and Adolfo Medinabeitia took 23 days to complete the climb. They first prepared 200 meters and then took 16 days on the final push.

Ecuador

El Obispo, El Altar. In early January, my wife Julie and I made the beautiful two-day approach to the volcano, El Altar. We intended to repeat the Italian route on the north face of El Obispo. (5340 meters, 17,520 feet), the highest of the nine summits of El Altar. When we reached the main glacier at first light on January 3, we had a good look at the enormous bergschrund that had opened and had been preventing parties from climbing El Obispo for the last month. We continued west and dropped below a long rotten rock nose and headed up toward the major icefall and climbed it directly. Two-and-a-half pitches of ice up to 80° were followed by another 200 feet of rock climbing on welded tuff up to 5.4 in difficulty. We then climbed 60° to 65° ice-and-snow runnels for nearly six pitches to the base of the rock summit pyramid. We climbed 400 more feet of 45° runnels with some small schrunds to the last 200 feet of very rotten rock. This