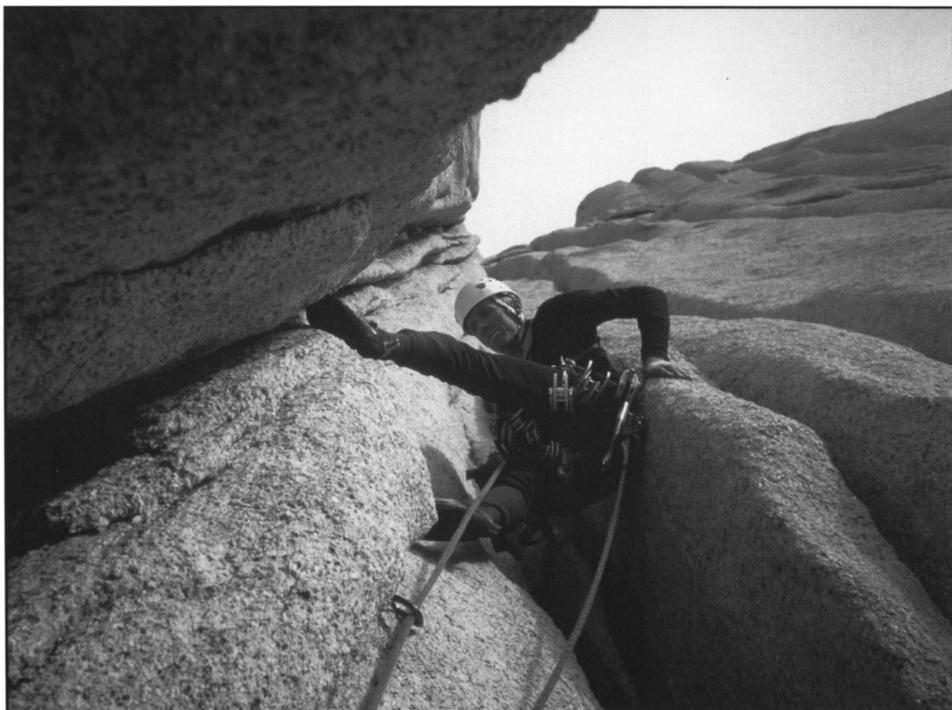


ing a number of the rappel anchors, and decided to bivy at 3 a.m. near the top of the ice section. We woke at 7 a.m. on March 2 in total white-out conditions, with 70 m.p.h. gusts and temperatures around 20°F, and began our rappel again. The weather began to clear and we finished our rappel at noon and reached our snow cave at 3 p.m., thirty-five hours after having left.

HANK MIDGELY

*Inominata, West Ridge, Attempt, and Aguja Poincenot, New Route.* I was in Patagonia from November 14 to December 12, 1996. After 17 days of the worst Patagonian weather I have yet seen, we broke through on December 2, when Jim Donini and I attempted the first ascent of the west ridge of Inominata. We thought the route would go easily in a day as a “warm-up” for the season. Difficult mixed climbing and convoluted horizontal route-finding didn’t go easily, or in a day. Twenty-four pitches and one bitterly cold open-bivy later, we joined the 1974 British route at a notch six pitches below the summit. We were unable to continue to the summit and complete the route due to serious dehydration and exhaustion. We retreated to high camp in the evening of December 3 just in time to watch Doug Byerly and Rolando Garibotti climb the upper section of *Chiaro di Luna*. (Note: Neither Jim nor I consider an alpine route done unless the summit is reached.)

On December 4 and 5 we attempted the first ascent of the north face of Aguja Poincenot. The arrival of a storm trapped us on a ledge half-way up the face on the 5th. We spent the night of the 5th and 6th on the ledge beside the top of our ninth pitch, hoping the storm would end, but



*Jim Donini, still shooting from the hip 20 years after the first ascent of Torre Egger: Pitch 8, Old Smuggler's Route. Greg Crouch*

our food ran out and we retreated to high camp on December 7.

The storm broke next morning, and we climbed again. We spent the night on a ledge at the top of the fourth pitch after the 1300-meter approach. (Poincenot's north face is approached as for the Carrington-Rouse route. From the base of the Carrington-Rouse ramp, continue up the hanging valley for another hour to the base of the north face.) Jim and I were very tired from seven consecutive days in action. The following day we climbed 13 more pitches of hard, sustained granite.

From the point where we reached the shoulder of Poincenot it took us three hours of scrambling, pitching and intricate route finding to get to the summit. A storm seemed to be coming on, so we spent less than two minutes on top. It was dark by the time we returned to the top of our route and we spent the rest of the night rigging rappels. We left virtually our entire rack for rappel anchors.

We arrived at our bivy gear, which we had left on the fourth pitch ledge, just after sunrise. After a few hours of rest we continued down to high camp, utterly exhausted.

Both Jim and I are very satisfied that we continued on to the true summit of Poincenot. A trend in Patagonian climbing has been to claim first ascents without actually bothering to do the last few meters to the summit. The hardest meter is always the last meter, because you have to get there to climb it—especially in a place like Patagonia, where a few extra hours in the face of an advancing storm can be the most terrifying hours of your life.

That Donini still has the “guns” to do new routes in Patagonia 20 years after his first ascent of Torre Egger is amazing. How many of his peers are still operating at such a standard? We named the route *The Old Smuggler's Route* in honor of the Argentine whisky that made our bad-weather time bearable.

GREG CROUCH

*Aguja de la S.* A Japanese solo climber made several unsuccessful attempts at climbing a new route on *Aguja de la S's* west face in November, 1995. Further details are lacking.

CAMERON M. BURNS

*Aguja de la S.* On January 15, 1996, I soloed a route on *la S* from the west. From the standard high bivy spot below *Inominata*, I climbed the long snow couloir between *St. Exupery* and *la S*. From the notch at the top I climbed the normal pitch (rock and mixed on my ascent) to the broad bench below *la S's* summit towers. From there I climbed the first series of cracks, in corners and chimneys, immediately left of the crest of the west ridge (which meant I was climbing on the north face). Four pitches of 5.9+ and mixed climbing (icy cracks) got me to the summit. I descended via the established rap route on the left side of the north face.

CHARLIE FOWLER

*Aguja de la S, Ascent.* Brad Schilling and Michael Clifford climbed the lower south summit, approaching it from the west side, in mid-January, 1997.

*Aguja de la S, East Face.* On February 6, I climbed the east face of *Aguja de la S* (2350 meters, 13 pitches, 60° 5.10b A0) with the Argentine climber Gadi Slomka. In excellent weather we reached the rimaya, climbed the first three pitches of snow (60 degrees, plus or minus), and then the principal dihedral (the Austrian route?), finding 10 pitches of very good rock and