

anchors or protection, onsight, with no previous attempts. We climbed 12 new pitches, using aid only due to icy cracks. The route would go free at 5.10 or .11 otherwise. We called our route *Hambre es el Major Salsa* ("hunger is the best sauce") (IV 5.10 A1), from the book *Don Quixote*. We descended the Monzino (standard) route, which we joined up high after about nine new pitches. After that, we called it good, and hiked out on March 1.

In all it was considered a very poor season for weather. At one point three feet of snow fell, creating avalanche hazards and soaking the routes. This was followed by the first clear day in 15 or 20 days, but all the climbers were immobilized by the fresh snow and avalanche hazards.

STEVE BULLOCK, *unaffiliated*

*Torre del Norte, British and Chilean Ascent.* On January 12 with the British climber Martin Chester, I climbed the Monzino Route (400 meters, eight pitches, VI/AO) in three and a half hours.

PABLO BESSER J., *Club Alemán Andino*

*Torre Central, Attempt, Conflagration, and Plain Hard Luck.* A British expedition comprising Noel Craine, Simon Nadin and Strappo Hughes did not summit on the Central Tower of Paine in the Chilean Patagonia in February. If you like ghost stories, then read on.

After weeks of uninspiring weather, Noel and Simon refixed 1,000 feet of the pre-existing big corner system (tried by Italians and Japanese and climbed by Spanish; the only route left of *Wild, Wild West* on the west face) and Strappo led into a superb unclimbed corner/crack system to the left. The climbing, though hard, was path-like compared to the various mishaps that occurred



*Strappo Hughes, perilously close to harm in Patagonia.*  
Strappo Hughes collection



Noel Craine, approaching high point of attempt on Torre Central.  
Strappo Hughes

found near Cerro Torre four years ago will soon be returned to its exact original location with humble apologies to its owner.

STRAPPO HUGHES, *unaffiliated*

*Torre Central, Bonington-Whillans.* After being in the park for four days, on February 10 Dave Nettle and I decided to hike to the base of the gully leading to the col between the North and Central Towers. The snow from previous days had given us concerns about potential avalanches. After two cups of coffee, we set out under cloudy skies. The weather became progressively better as we climbed up to our gear; the gully had avalanched recently, then frozen the night before, paving our way to the base of the rock. With little wind and patchy skies we set out up the route at 2 p.m. The climbing varied widely in the 11 pitches we climbed. When we reached the summit at 11 p.m., the weather began to worsen and continued to do so as we descended through the night. We arrived at the col for an amazing Patagonian sunrise, and got back to Campamento Torres 27 hours later in time for that third cup of coffee.

BEAN BOWERS, *Unaffiliated*

back in base camp. A 25-foot tree branch snapped off above our (borrowed) Himalayan Hotel, fell 50 feet and bisected the tent mere inches from my toes. Two days later the cabin of the Japanese Camp went up in flames at 2 a.m. Totally inexplicable. Cases of propane, liters of white gas and three MSR stoves took to the night air as did much of the camp's food and climbing gear.

A decent day arrived and we climbed our system to easy ground in three long pitches of 5.10 and 5.11 climbing. As another storm looked likely we started rappelling off just after nightfall, having continued to fix to our highest point.

On February 22, Strappo learned of the murder of his sister in Liverpool and returned to England.

With 400 feet left to summit, Noel and Simon jumared the lines and discovered that one of the ropes had snapped. Practically all the gear was at the top of the wall, so reclimbing the route was out of the question.

The small metal crucifix that was