

point about 200 meters short of the summit in deteriorating weather.

On November 27, Conrad Anker, Jim Donini and Mike MacDowell joined our Base Camp, armed with a Twin Otter full of equipment, gourmet food, great wine and great spirits. The weather got worse the next day and never improved. The area is excellent, and there are more first ascents to be done. I feel like we barely touched its potential.

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*Mt. Slaughter, First Ascent.* It was reported that Guy Cotter and Terry Gardiner made the first ascent of Mt. Slaughter (ca. 3600m) south of the Vinson Massif. The two sled-hauled for a day, then spent another day reaching the base of Mt. Slaughter's north face. Cotter led 11 70-meter pitches over 50-60° ice in a thin gully that divides two buttresses to the right of the summit. A few more pitches brought the men to the top. (*Rock and Ice* 91)

*Antarctica, Various Ascents.* The weather in interior Antarctic during the austral summer of 1998-'99 can best be described as chaotic. Frequent moist storms brought an abnormal amount of snow to this very dry part of the planet. The complications were directly felt by Vinson climbers, many of whom were unable to fly onto the continent. Delays of 21 days were the norm. On December 1, Dave Hahn and I climbed the West Couloir on Gardner. This is the classic route established by the Nick Clinch-Pete Scheoning team of 1966-'67. We discovered remnants of that expedition, including old hemp rope, pitons and a cache of chocolate at the last camp. The chocolate was still edible. With this summit, I have climbed six of the highest summits in the Sentinel Range (Gardner, Tyree, Loretan [a.k.a. "Kindness"], Shinn, Vinson and Craddock). Epperly is still waiting. I lost my psyche as I heard about Dan Osman's death the day I was to head out of camp. I sat around and drank scotch instead. . . .

Jim Donini and I tried the west ridge of Epperly but turned back half-way up. It is perhaps the longest ridge above the glacial trim line in the Sentinels, and has lots of gendarmes. On December 28, I climbed the west ridge proper on Vinson Massif. This is the right-hand skyline as seen from Base Camp. I think it is a different route than what the Slovenians climbed in 1996, though it is hard to figure out. The route involved 2000 meters in elevation gain, rock up to 5.6 and alpine névé. A most enjoyable route. Total time round-trip was 18.5 hours. I had to walk down so it wasn't that fast.

I skied the prominent fin north of the north ice stream on the west face. The run had a section of 40°. Dave Hahn and I would like to re-route the normal route up this fin, as it is less exposed to objective hazards than the current route up the icefall between CII and CIII. My time was two minutes slower than last year, but I stopped to visit en route and who really gives, as Vonnegut says, "a flying fuck at a rolling donut."

Dave's Vinson Massif total is now 14.

CONRAD ANKER