

*Changi Tower Main Peak, Excess Baggage.* *Excess Baggage* starts directly above Camp I at the base of a four-pitch, left-facing corner. (Camp I is at the base of the bottom tier of Changi Tower. Changi is two-tiered on its east face, with the bottom tier being much slabrier than the top tier.) Nicola Woolford (New Zealand), Abby Watkins (Australia) and I climbed this in four 5.9-5.10 pitches; the second and fourth included short bursts of easy A1 aid climbing. The first three pitches of this route were first climbed free by Wong and Kynan Bazley in 1995. The corner joins Norton and Weber's route, which was then unknowingly climbed for the next eight pitches. *Excess Baggage* then branched left along the left-hand edge of the Off-White Spider, leading to two pitches, one of 5.9 and the other 5.10. This led to 100 meters of fourth-class ground and Camp II after three days' climbing. Camp II was located on the southern saddle between the upper and lower tiers of Changi Tower's east face.

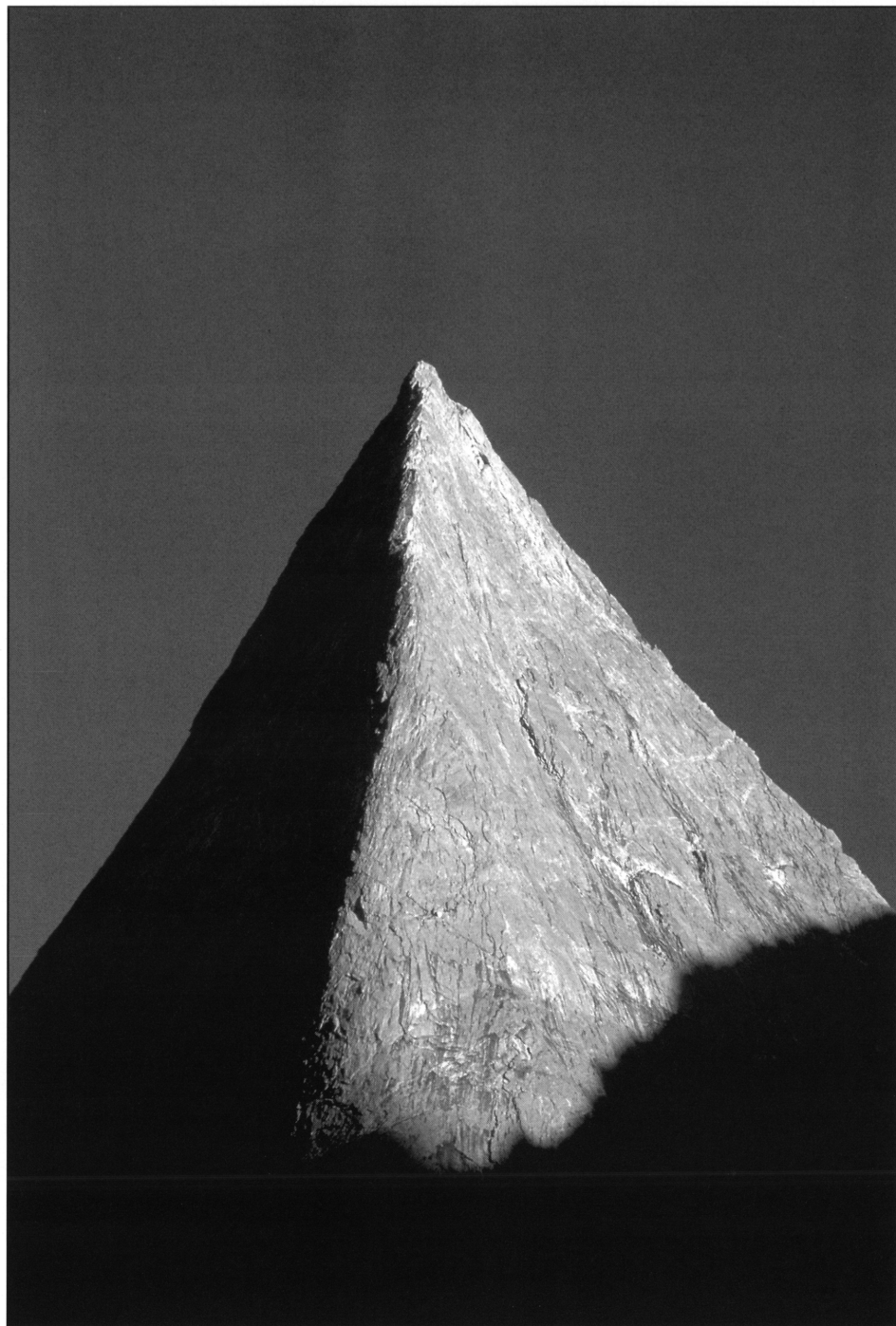
The route continued up a prominent crack on the top headwall. This involved a 50-meter traverse on snow, followed by a short A1 overhanging aid section that led into the crack proper. It required two days to climb the flaring crack, with five pitches of 5.9 to 5.10+ free climbing interspersed with sections of A1 aid climbing. From the top of the crack, the route followed a rising traverse to the right along a moss-filled shallow seam. This was then followed by a pendulum into a parallel crack system, which led to a long sloping ledge threatened by cornices. The traverse pitch (A2+) was the crux of the route. On the left end of the ledge a 5.10 A2 pitch and a 5.9 A1 pitch led to the fifth and sixth nights' bivvy. Day six of the climb was spent in a wet snow storm.

The final rock pitches took a 50-meter, boulder-filled, left-facing corner to a low-angled 400-meter snow ridge. The Main Summit of Changi Tower was reached at 11:15 a.m. on day seven and is approximately 20 meters higher than the North Summit. The descent followed the ascent route to the half-way saddle and continued down a southwest-facing scree- and snow-filled couloir. Four hours were needed to descend the low-angled couloir, with only one short five-meter abseil required. Base Camp was reached at 1:30 a.m. after a 20-hour day.

VERA WONG, *Australia*

*Charakusa Valley, Various Ascents.* Conrad Anker, Peter Croft, and Galen Rowell spent the month of July climbing five rock spires in the Charakusa Valley east of Masherbrum above Hushe. The longest climb of the expedition was Conrad and Peter's 23-hour round-trip on Spansar Brakk via a huge ridge traverse right from the Charakusa Glacier. The line is wholly visible from Saitcho Camp, one stage above Hushe, as the longest chunk of granite in front of K7 on the left side of the glacier. The route followed a knife-edge of granite for over 8,000 feet of ridge line. Doing Spansar in "normal" style with multiple ropes, sleeping bags, water, food, etc., would have taken the three of us at least three days, but Peter, who holds the El Cap speed record of four hours, 22 minutes, saw the possibility of doing it with one partner, one rope, one water bottle each, a few PowerBars, and no bivvy gear. Peter calls the route "the biggest and best climb I've done—or seen—in my life." It was a 5.11a free climb with lots of simul-climbing for speed. From the first time Peter saw the continuous line of sharp ridge rising from the glacier to the summit, he was focused on it as his primary objective.

Before that climb, Conrad and Galen spent a day making the first ascent of Lucky Shinmo Spire (5.11b, 900'). This is the Balti name for index finger, referring to a set of three spires shaped like fingers on a hand in a side valley east of Spansar Brakk. From a camp in the same side valley, Galen soloed Nakpa Brakk (5.9, 1,200'), the third and final spire on the main



*Naysir Brakk (the "Luxor Pyramid") in the Charakusa Valley, Pakistan Karakoram, soloed by Galen Rowell via the 1,000-foot face to the left of the right skyline. GALEN ROWELL*

ridge of Spansar, and a couple of hundred feet lower than the main summit. He set off to explore the 17,500-foot spire for a later, roped ascent, but found an easy traverse ledge and decided to continue to the top in just a few hours.

While Peter and Conrad were preparing and resting up for Spansar, Galen decided to explore a possible route up the north arête of Naysar Brakk, an incredible dark granite spire shaped like the Luxor Pyramid between K7 Base Camp and Spansar on the north side of the Charakusa Glacier. He brought a rope and hardware for a safe self-belay and climbed a new 5.10b route up the 1,000-foot face to the left of the north arête, which we later learned had been climbed in 1988 by David Hamilton's British expedition using direct aid. At the time, Galen thought the summit to be unclimbed because he found no sign of passage above a rappel anchor 500 feet below the top, and the loose rocks on top had not been made into a cairn. An Italian party of Lecco Spiders camped below K7 said they knew of an attempt to climb a face route that failed well below the summit, where Galen's watch altimeter read only 16,500 feet. The report of Naysar's first ascent in the 1989 *AAJ* says that the spire, unnamed on maps, is 18,700 feet. Since our watches matched closely at other altitudes, but seemed low compared to maps, we would estimate that Naysar could be over 17,000 feet, but probably not over 18,000.

The day after Conrad and Peter's Spansar ascent, Galen teamed up with two Lecco Spiders, Villa Natale and Luca Maspes, to make the first ascent of Iqbal's Wall, a 1,100-foot dihedral of steep cracks up to 5.10d beneath the massive 6,000-foot granite wall of K7 (still off-limits to climbing because its other side borders a glacier linked to the ongoing Siachen Glacier war).

GALEN ROWELL

*Charakusa Valley, Various Ascents.* An Italian expedition comprising Maurizio Giordani, Luca "Rampikino" Maspes, Mattia Locatelli and Natale Villa were active in the Charakusa Valley in July, making a number of ascents, including the ascent mentioned above on Iqbal's Wall with Galen Rowell. A complete account of the Italians' expedition to the area appears in an article earlier in this journal.

*Brakk Zang, Ganyips.* From June 28 to July 5, Pep Masip and I put up a new route on the southeast face of a virgin mountain named Brakk Zang (4800m) in one of the secondary Hushe valleys of the Pakistan Karakoram. We called the route *Ganyips* (VI 6a A3, 540m), which is Catalan for a sort of dry fruit, like hazelnuts, almonds, peanuts. There is an offwidth on the third pitch. There are nine long pitches, one of them 75 meters. We spent nine days (eight bivies) on the wall, with some snowy days. We had fixed two pitches (110 meters) on June 25-26 before beginning.

There aren't any bolts on the new route, just pitons at some belays because we had to rap down the route. At first we thought we could descend by walking down the north side, but when we got the top we realized that it was too difficult.

SÍLVIA VIDAL, *Spain*

*Diran, Ascent.* Adrian Burgess and Rob Ziegler made the first American ascent of Diran (23,838') on July 10. The mountain was climbed in alpine-style over three days; we climbed the final 4,800 feet in eight hours to summit at midday. Base Camp was reached again at 10