

On June 22, Nat Patridge, Kris Erickson, Chris Trimble and I descended Huascaran (6768m) from the summit via *The Shield*, a 400-meter, 50- to 60-degree ice face that hangs in the middle of the west face. The snow was soft, edgeable and smooth the whole way. The line was well sustained, with not a turn under 50 degrees (after the upper flat football fields, anyway). Carving turns in easy, turnable snow at 6000 meters, toying with the void lurking below, was a real treat.

HANS SAARI, *unaffiliated*

*Huandoy Norte, North Face, Attempt, and Northwest Face, Solo Ascent.* It was 7 a.m. as Ed Diffendal and I began the task of flagging down a taxi in Huaraz, Peru, our sights set on climbing Huandoy Norte. As we flagged down a taxi, we realized that it just was not the same heading off to climb without our partner and good friend Sean Ogle, who was unfortunately still in bed, sick. His company and Spanish-speaking skills were missed on the taxi ride into the Paron Valley. Despite illness, Sean was planning on catching up with us the next morning.

Once Ed and I arrived at Laguna Paron, we spotted an unclimbed line on the north face of Huandoy Norte. We took off immediately, leaving Sean to fend for himself. He was so sick, we were sure he would not show the following day; little did we know that he was en route.

Ed and I took off for the long hike up to Huandoy Norte through a heavily crevassed glacier. Our motto was "light, fast, and furious," and we brought along only the essentials. We left Sean a note to catch up with us, but forgot to tell him where we were.

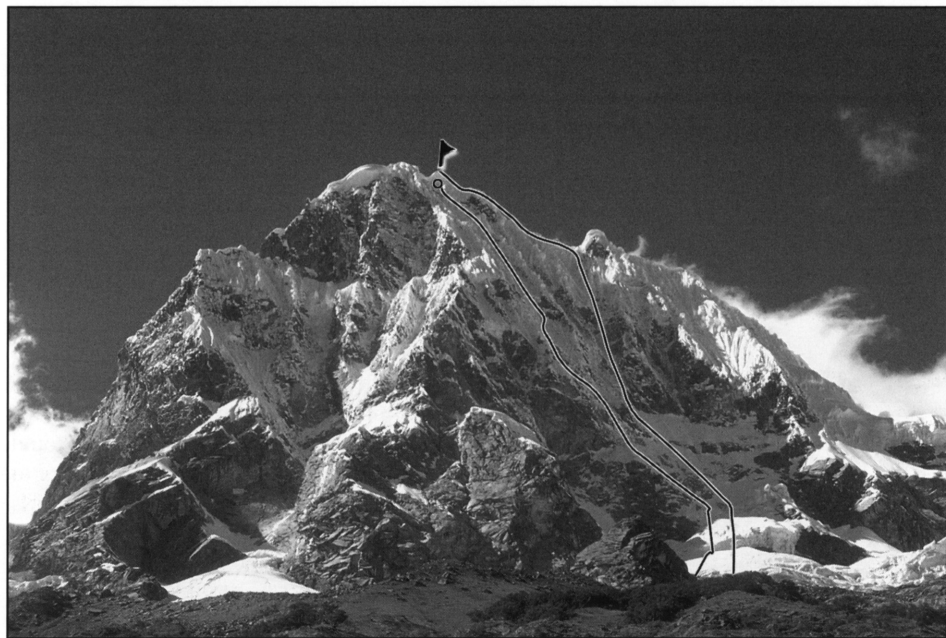
Ed took the first lead of the day, almost plummeting into the bergschrund as the bottom of the lip broke off, leaving him hanging by his poorly seated tools. Somehow he managed to hang in there and not drag us both into the bowels of the beast. Sean, meanwhile, was on his way, eager to arrive and join us on the climb.

For Ed and me, many pitches of steep ice, the extreme cold, and lack of sleep left us exhausted after our second day of climbing. As the rotten vertical ice taxed our bodies and minds, we chose to retreat, leaving our dream of a new route in a quick style behind. Little did we know that Sean was alone climbing on the face just next to us. He figured that we would be on the route that we had proposed to climb the night before at the bar. Sean soloed the Northwest Face of Huandoy via a brilliant variation, climbing on the rim of the exposed north face and the giant rock buttress below. The climb took over 42 hours from top to bottom. He climbed this route sans bivy gear, stove, etc., running out of water on hour 20 of his push up the mountain.

We returned to Huaraz to find that Sean had taken off to meet us! We began to get worried, as we had all the ropes and gear he would need to descend. One more day passed and we were getting ready to head back to the Paron to look for Sean when a knock came at our door. In came a note explaining that Sean was fine and resting up in a refugio on the other side of the mountain. Badly dehydrated and exhausted, he had climbed up the northwest face and then downclimbed the standard route on the south side. An excellent effort, to say the least.

ROBBIE WILLIAMS

*Nevado Uta, Northwest Face, Attempt.* Early July found me slightly crazed and very skinny from a month of wild times in the Cordillera Blanca. Dysentery and excessive celebration played their part, but a 25-hour, 1500-meter attempt on Huandoy Norte and a six day round-



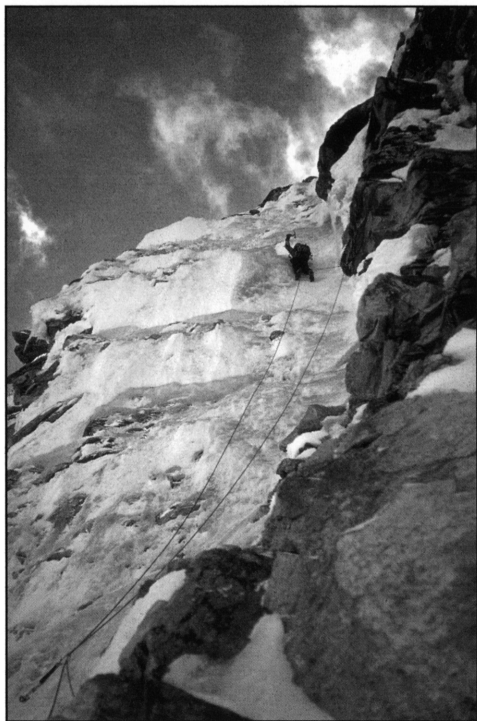
*The northwest face of Nevado Uta, showing the Northwest Face (left) (Earl-Trimble, 2000; does not reach summit) and (right) the South African route (Cheesmond-Dawson, 1977. CHRIS TRIMBLE*

trip ski/snowboard descent of the *Shield* route on Huascaran Sur (see note above) had left me feeling relaxed and gluttonous. The arrival in Huaraz of a highly motivated old friend had snapped me out of my reverie. Jim Earl had arrived in Peru while I was on Huascaran, and had acclimatized by climbing two new routes in the Paron Valley. Our main ambition was to climb the stupendous 1600-meter north face of Huascaran Norte via a line near the Catalan route, but after four days of storms, load carrying and vomiting (by me) at a 4700-meter high camp below the face, we retreated, moaning.

With only five days left before my departure, we scrambled to find an accessible yet inspiring objective (luckily, an easy task in the Blanca). Although accessible by car in only a few hours from downtown Huaraz, Nevado Uta (5875m) towers 2000 meters above the rough Paso Uta road, and had been scaled only a handful of times, by two existing routes.

We had hoped to attempt a futuristic ice line on the unclimbed north face proper, but a large band of wet, blank granite down low turned our attention to the northwest face, first climbed in 1977 over five days by Dave Cheesmond and partner. The 1977 line climbed the right edge of the face to the west ridge and continued to the summit, but there were no routes (that we knew of) directly to the summit via the steep central face. With only three days remaining until I had to be in Lima, one-push style was the only option.

We departed our high camp at the leisurely hour of 6 a.m. in a light snowstorm, simul-climbing 600 feet of snow as steep as 65 degrees to the first belayed pitch, a beautiful iced-up dihedral with cams in good granite for pro. Steep icefields interspersed with short, intricate ice pitches led to the crux curtain, an amazing cascade 200 feet wide and a ropelength high with many difficult variations. Traversing in from the right, we were able to climb the curtain via a sustained, just-off-vertical groove of crusty Andean snow and ice separated from



*Jim Earl swinging for Jesus on the northeast face of Nevado Uta.* CHRIS TRIMBLE

the wall by a foot. The climbing was spectacular, but not overly difficult, as rest steps were easily gained with a light kick through the curtain.

We climbed the upper face via the large central couloir that divides into a maze of flutings 500 feet from the summit. Clouds had filtered in, making route finding difficult. Which fluting would lead to the real summit cornice? Of four doors, we chose the left-center line, and climbed it in whiteout conditions to its top just below the wild meringues of the summit ridge. Was this the right mushroom? At the last anchor, during a brief clearing, we could see the true summit cornice 60 meters to the west, and only 30 meters higher, across a number of gravity-defying spines and disintegrating snow mushrooms. Close, but no cigar. The Northwest Face (ED-90°, 1000m) of Nevado Uta (5875m): 12 hours up, five hours, 14 V-threads, two rock anchors, and a bunch of down climbing, with intermittent snow throughout. What a blast!

CHRIS TRIMBLE, *unaffiliated*

## Paron Valley

*Aguja III and Caraz I, Attempts.* In mid-June, I hooked up with Stephen Koch in Huaraz for some fine climbing in the Paron Valley. We spent a day carrying loads up from the refugio, then got hopelessly cliffed out trying to descend directly to the lake (not recommended).

What followed, however, was a pleasant week spent in the high country of the Blanca. We soaked up views across the valley of Huandoy Norte. Our campsite was remote and seldom visited. We left late one morning to climb five pitches of steep snow and ice in a narrow couloir on its south-southwest side to just below the summit of Aguja III.

The main objective, however, was the south face of Caraz I. Our intended route was a directissima left of the Albi Sole route, that passed through the summit rock pyramid directly to the summit. Two thousand feet of snow and ice to 65 degrees began the day. Next came 600 feet of steep ice and mixed terrain, with rotten ice in places, to below the rock pyramid. One steep crack pitch led to a narrow stance where a diagonal feature appeared to lead out right, through the steepest part of the rock, to the summit snows. Unfortunately, the rock was horrendously loose, so we could not safely push the route to summit. We rappelled 16 ropelengths, with some down climbing, to reach the base of the mountain. I believe the route is climbable by a party willing to take the risks of aiding on steep, very loose rock in a remote location.

JIM EARL, *unaffiliated*