

GPS team (see below) and the experienced Spanish climber Miguel Angel Vidal. Miguel and friends had made the second ascent of the 1999 Anker route on the right side of the West Face Ice Stream in December 2003. During that time they had scouted and attempted the obvious couloir at the right-most extremity of the rocky section of the main West Face, just left of the Ice Stream. Returning this year, he first climbed a minor route with Maria Jesus "Chus" Lago at the far left end of the West Face, up a short, moderate snow slope to reach the Vinson normal route. Maria descended, having already summited via the normal route some days earlier, so Miguel then went to the summit from that point on December 28.

On December 31 Miguel left his camp down on the Branscomb Glacier and approached the main face alone. Eight and a half hours later he reached the top via the 1,800m Banana Friendship Gully, overcoming much poor snow and several rock sections. His route took him up to and behind a small but obvious gendarme high on the face and over to the normal route on Vinson, which he then descended without going to the summit, arriving in Camp 3 at 11:30 pm.

DAMIEN GILDEA, *Australia*, AAC

*Jaca Peak (3,372m), southeast face; Vinson West, Galfrio Route; Mt. Vinson (4,897m), Friendship Banana Gully to Branscomb ridge.* On December 23 Chus (Maria Jesús) Lago and I attempted a new route on Vinson West face, but our backpacks were too heavy and our progress too slow. After climbing 600 meters, we decided to change our strategy. Chus Lago summited Vinson on her 40th birthday (Christmas), while I had to turn back due to the -30°C cold, accompanied by strong winds. On December 26, I moved to the southwest ridge of Mt. Shinn to explore a possible route there. Afterward I traversed to Jaca Peak (3,372m) and climbed it following a straight line up to the summit through the southeast face. Jaca Peak was first climbed in 1995 by a Spanish team, consisting of a group of the Military High Mountain patrol and the "Al Filo de lo Imposible" TV documentary team.



The main section of the west face of Mt. Vinson. (1) Linear Accelerator (Jay Smith, 1994). (2) Banana Friendship Gully (Miguel Angel Vidal, 2004). (3) Rudi's Runway (Rudiger Lang, 1991). *Damien Gildea*

On December 27 Chus and I climbed together a new route on the southern edge of Vinson West's rocky wall. It took us eight hours to climb 1,000 vertical meters on a rock spur. We named the new route "Galfrio" as a tribute to the expedition sponsor. The route includes some difficulties on ice and mixed terrain up to UIAA IV and 45° to 55° ice. The last 200 meters offered the most difficult section, as the climb progressed

on very hard blue ice and unstable snow.

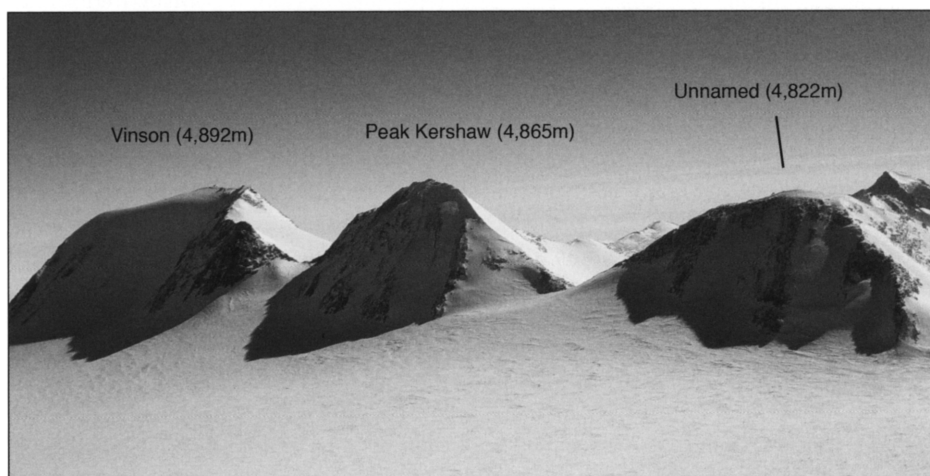
On December 28, I climbed the four-km-long Branscomb Ridge, past the point where it joins the new Galfrio route, up to the main summit of that ridge.

On December 31 I climbed a new route on Mt. Vinson following an unmistakable banana-shaped couloir that crosses Vinson's west face. Therefore, I named the new itinerary "Friendship Banana Gully." It took me 8.5 hours to climb 1,700 vertical meters from the foot of the wall to the Branscomb Ridge at 4,400m. The new route follows 50°-55° slopes on alternately crusted and loose snow, along with some rock outcrops. There were some mixed sections up to IV. I found no ice at all, just some patches of hard snow.

MIGUEL ANGEL VIDAL, *Spain*

*Vinson, new height (4,892m), first ascents of sub-peaks, many new peak names.* As the name implies, Vinson Massif is a large bulk of mountain with numerous summits. Though the main summit, first climbed in December 1966, has now had over 950 ascents, all but one of the other high summits, arranged around a high plateau, were unclimbed until this season. The Omega High Antarctic GPS Expedition aimed to climb and measure as many of these peaks as possible, to ascertain the height-order of these summit peaks and to resolve other topographical issues with a view to producing a new and more accurate map of the Massif in 2006. Damien Gildea of Australia and Rodrigo Fica of Chile, who both climbed and measured nearby Mt. Shinn in December 2001, returned with young Chilean climber Camilo Rada for this year's work. Camilo would also record weather data to ascertain the suitability of high Antarctic mountains for future infrared telescope sites.

The Omega team flew to the mountain on November 16 after a two-week weather delay at Patriot Hills. Alone on the mountain, they ferried 50 days of food and fuel to Camp 2 over the next week, established Camp 3 on November 25 and made the season's first summit of Vinson on the 28th. The three set a tent a few meters below the summit and spent seven hours



The south faces of Vinson Massif, Kershaw Peak, and Unnamed Peak 4,822m from the summit of Long Top (4,841m). In the distant right background is the summit of Mt. Tyree (4,852m). *Damien Gildea*