It is clear that the mountain conditions have changed since the 1980s. Rockfall during the summer months make the mountain too dangerous. Whether subsequent summers will see as much rockfall as in summer 2003 is hard to say. Judging by that year's quantity of falling rock and reports from previous years, it is safe to say that summers will be unpredictable.

In 2004 we chose to climb the mountain in November, when the route is frozen, there tend to be more days of clear weather, and it is not too cold (though it was pretty cold). The first 15 vertical meters at the bottom of the couloir was good ice. The couloir was mostly snow and ice climbing. We secured the fixed line with pitons on the lower half of the couloir and with ice screws on the remainder of the route. There are no flat spots to put a tent on the entire route. For our high camp we had to shovel the loose snow off a section of the ridge at 5,834m to create a small platform. This platform was no more than five feet wide, just wide enough for a small tent.

Seasonal climbing conditions: I made my first visit to Mt. Siguniang's glacier in late April 1996. At that time there was a heavy, wet snow pack starting around 4,600m. Although April can be nice, the heavy spring snows do not melt off until May or June. During the summer months you get longer stretches of alternating good and bad weather, but due to potential rockfall, I do not suggest attempting Siguniang July through September. Autumn months are good because the weather tends to be clearer and there is only moderate snow accumulation, but there can be heavy winds and it is quite cold. Winter ascents are possible (very, very cold), and from December through spring be especially aware of avalanche danger.

Team members: Cao Jun, China (Leader); Jia Guiting, China. Summiters on November 17: Jon Otto, USA; Ma Yihua, China; Tim Boelter, USA (film maker). Summiters on November 18, all from China: Chen Junchi, Kang Hua, Chen Zigang.

JON OTTO, *AAC*

Siguniang, north face attempt; Siguniang North, attempt; Camel Peaks. The Siguniang Group was visited in May by UK alpinists, Tom Chamberlain, Dave Evans, Dave Hollinger, and Andy Sharpe. This team, which set up Base Camp in the Chang Ping, had as its aims the lengthy unclimbed southwest ridge of Siguniang and the uncompleted line on the north face attempted in 1981 by Jack Tackle and party. However, from the outset the mountains had a largely snowy appearance and the weather allowed no real improvement, being very unsettled throughout their stay.

In order to acclimatize the team turned to the humped Camel Peaks to the north. These are the two peaks on the northern rim of the valley, occupied by Pts 5,202m and 5,484m. They were both climbed from the col between the two summits by Charlie Fowler in 1994. First Chamberlain and Evans climbed Camel West from the gap and subsequently Hollinger and Sharpe climbed West and East peaks from the gap. Both peaks gave straightforward snowy climbing and were thought to be of equal height—around 5,510m. Chamberlain and Evans then attempted Pt 5,672m (dubbed Snow Goose), the next peak north of Signuniang North (5,700m: a subsidiary summit at the base of the north ridge of Siguniang) but retreated in heavy snowfall. They then set out for a fine rock tower on the west side of the valley dubbed Paine Peak, probably corresponding to Pt 5,422m on the map, but were again thwarted by the weather. A final attempt on Snow Goose reached the 5,200m col below the south ridge, then continued up snow on this ridge until a point estimated to be only 150m from this virgin summit. Here,

the slope was so dangerously avalanche prone that the pair had no option but to retreat.

Meanwhile, Hollinger and Sharpe had attempted the north face of Siguniang. They swam up steep unconsolidated snow over granite to reach the crest of the spur tried by the Americans in 1981, then climbed several pitches of Scottish 3-4 mixed before realizing the route was totally out of condition and would prove far too time consuming for the very limited breaks in the weather. A few days later they went around to the col below Snow Goose and attempted the northeast ridge of unclimbed Siguniang North, carrying enough food so that if a fine spell materialized they could continue up the north ridge of Siguniang itself (descended by Fowler and Ramsden in 2002). They took to the right flank of the ridge and climbed about 200m of this 500m line, negotiating wet snow over very shattered rock, before deciding to bail in heavy spindrift. As if on cue a sustained blizzard moved in and accompanied them all the way back to Base. For the more ice/mixed climbing that the area offers, the team feel a return visit earlier in the year, perhaps from January to March when the weather is rumored to be more settled, would prove fruitful.

LINDSAY GRIFFIN, *Mountain INFO Editor, CLIMB magazine*

Siguniang National Park, Suang Qiao Gou Valley: Mi Mi Shan (5,018m), first ascent; Heart of Cow (Niuxim Shan) (4,942m), north face, first ascent. Giant pandas and Chinese acrobats swung the balance. After being inspired by Tomatsu Nakamura's splendid photographs of blank-looking granite and unclimbed walls featured in the Japanese Alpine News, we were inspired to find out more about this magical-looking area. No mega objectives presented themselves, but nevertheless we headed off in search of an Oriental adventure in the Suang Qiao Gou Valley, close to Mt. Siguniang.

Mick Fowler helped out by providing more useful information, as did Tanja and Andrej Grmovsek from Slovenia. With only three weeks to climb, arriving in Chengdu in July was a gamble due to forecasts for heavy rainfall. Our Chinese helper and cook extraordinaire Lenny was enthusiastic as we shopped for provisions playing the pass-the-parcel, guess-what's-in-the-packet game. The bus to Rilong called, and we set off on the six- to seven-hour journey through wooded panda-infested valleys. After visiting the curiously named "Tourist Service Centre" for our permissions and paying an environmental protection fee and park entrance, we set off on the tourist bus up the valley.

On this expedition we climbed two new peaks, one a subsidiary and one a main peak in the Suang Qiao Gou Valley. Setting up base camp at 4,100m, we took equipment to the base of the route near a stunning aquamarine lake and some fine three-pitch E6 climbing leading to the shoulder of Putala Shan. On the walls of a long rock ridge opposite Putala Shan we ascended right of a spur for 9 pitches, 350m at E3/E4 5c, to reach a sub peak we called Mi Mi Shan (5,018m). Should you be feeling particularly brave it may be possible to descend into a notch and then ascend a tricky loose and extremely narrow ridge from here to reach the main summit of 5,400m. We were in no fit condition for that. The granite intermittently formed rubble strewn ledges as we weaved our way up. Behind, the pointy snow-flushed cirque beckoned for another day. Many big walls and spires rise up and extend into the distance, as well as a feast of unclimbed peaks in the 5,200m-5,900m range.

The second objective we went for was "Heart of Cow" (Niuxim Shan), named by the Chinese. According to Lenny a Japanese team had attempted it the year before and reached