requiring a short bout of exposed and delicate climbing. We placed the GPS right on top. Manuel and Camilo repeated the route the following day, retrieving the GPS. This later showed that Gardner is 4,573m, 14m lower than its old official height.

In continuing good weather, we flew to the east side of the range and landed in soft, deep snow on the beautiful Patton Glacier. There, we established a base camp with marvelous views of Tyree, Gardner, Ostenso, and Evans Peak. We spent Christmas and New Year's Eve in bad weather—cloud, fog, wind, and light snow—but managed to place a cache at the foot of the east face of Tyree. Our intended route was the Grand Couloir, first climbed in November 1997 by French alpinists Antoine Cayrol and Antoine de Choudens, from the GMHM expedition that also made the first ascents of Mt. Shear (4,050m) and Evans Peak (3,950m). One month after the French ascent, Conrad Anker and Alex Lowe summited via a slight variant on the same route, with Dave Hahn turning back up high. Tyree has not been climbed since.

We climbed a variant of the lower route, not using the couloir but going directly up the northeast ridge from its base, moving unroped with heavy packs. We placed a small tent at 3,247m in a small exposed col, where Steve Chaplin and I spent two nights. However, the condition of the couloir above was not good, with very hard ice lying under just a few centimeters of soft, sugary snow. Higher, large patches of slick blue ice were visible. These conditions, combined with incoming bad weather, led me to decide against climbing the route at this time. Two days later we descended in a whiteout to our base camp on the Patton and several days after that flew out of Antarctica.

The height order of Antarctica's highest mountains now looks like this:

1. Vinson Massif 4,892m
2. Mt. Tyree 4,852m *
3. Mt. Shinn 4,661m
4. Mt. Gardner 4,573m
5. Mt. Kirkpatrick 4,528m *
6. Mt. Elizabeth 4,480m *
7. Mt. Craddock 4,368m

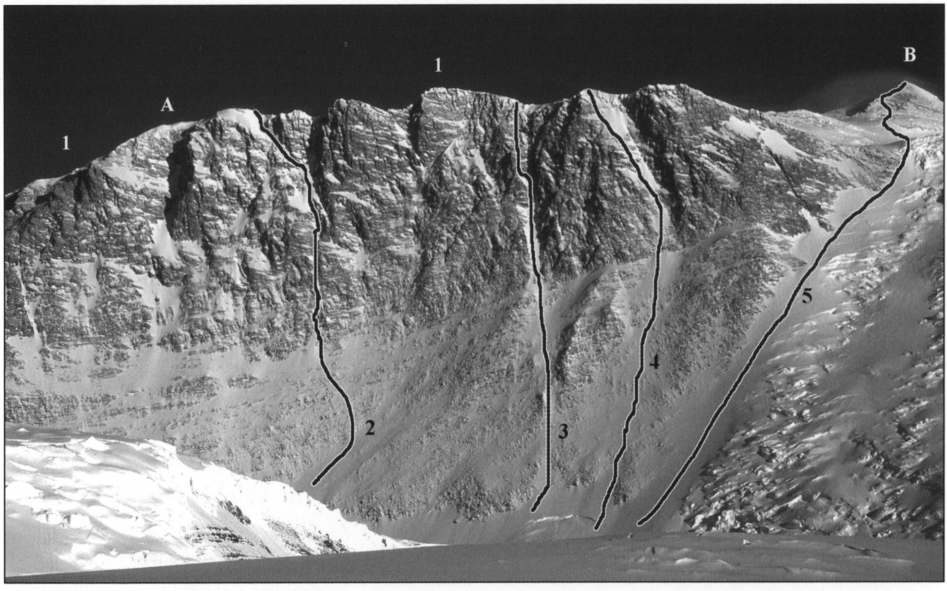
Note: * denotes *not* measured by the Omega Foundation. These peaks are probably lower than the figures indicate.

The resulting data from this survey will be included on a new topographical map of the Sentinel Range, to be published later in 2006 and distributed worldwide, free of charge, in the interests of furthering knowledge of Antarctica and contributing to Antarctic science.

DAMIEN GILDEA, *Australia, AAC, Omega Foundation*

Vinson Massif, west face, Purple Haze Couloir. It was January 15, 2005 and we had been stuck in Vinson base camp for several days, waiting for clear weather so we could fly to Patriot Hills and then home. The weather was cloudy enough to prevent a safe landing but not bad enough to keep us from climbing. Around midnight we put together a small amount of gear and prepared for our climb. Neither of us had brought technical gear; we were there to guide people up the Normal Route on Vinson, not to climb steep snow and mixed ground. So, with borrowed technical tools, 30m of rope and a few screws, we set out.

On our ski to the base of the west face we discussed which of the gullies to try. We both had thoughts of the unclimbed gully just left of Banana Friendship Gully but shared doubts of



The central section of the west face of Vinson Massif seen across the Branscomb Glacier. (A) Branscomb Point (4,520m), (B) Main Summit (4,892m). (1) Branscomb Ridge (probably first crossed in descent by Mike Hood and Roger Mear in 1994: ascended in 2004 by Miguel Angel Vidal). (2) Linear Accelerator (ca. 1,700m, WI3 5.9: Jay Smith, solo, January 6, 1994). (3) Purple Haze Gully (1,700m, 70° and Mixed: Dave Morton-Todd Passey, January 15, 2005). (4) Friendship Banana Gully (ca. 1,700m, 50-55° and rock/mixed at UIAA IV: Miguel Angel Vidal, solo, December 31, 2004:). (5) Central Ice Stream – Rudi's Runway (ca. 1,700m: Rudi Lang, solo, January 1991). (6) Just off picture is the Central Ice Stream – Right Side (ca. 1,700m: Conrad Anker, twice in 1999, the second time to the summit: repeated by Spanish on December 23, 2003). *Damien Gildea*

its feasibility, given our meager rack. We decided to give it a try, but were willing to back off if it became too difficult to climb safely without proper gear.

At 2 a.m. we began climbing. From the Branscomb Glacier the route starts with a bergschrund, followed by a 40-50° snow slope through broken rock bands. The climbing was on perfect névé that gradually got steeper. The angle approached 70° as we entered the gully, which, higher, narrowed until it ended in a 10m chimney barring access to a low-angle slab. Once above the chimney we discussed turning back, but it seemed more dangerous to retreat than to keep going, so we carried on.

From the low-angle slab we traversed left to a sloping ledge, which led to a snowy ridge. The crest looked like it might offer a direct shot to the top of the face, but instead it led to another 500m of 50-60° mixed climbing. It was a spectacular night with colorful skies and an ever-present "purple haze" above. We topped out in the late morning and, knowing planes were now likely to be flying, opted to forgo the last few hundred meters of straightforward climbing to the summit.

The route, which we named Purple Haze Couloir, gave 1,750m of climbing on snow and short sections of mixed terrain up to IV 70° (we started from the Branscomb Glacier at 2,800m and reached the ridge atop the face at 4,600m). We went from base camp to base camp in 13 hours, descending by the normal route. As we suspected and as Murphy's Law would have it, not long after we started our climb the weather improved sufficiently to get our clients on

planes to Patriot Hills. However, the gracious ALE staff were kind enough to wait until they saw us coming, before calling the last plane of the season to Vinson base camp.

DAVE MORTON AND TODD PASSEY, *AAC*

Epperly (4,359m, left) and Shinn (4,661m), seen from Pico Jaca to the west-southwest. The line of the Lewis-Nonis route to the Epperly-Shinn col (ca. 4,100m) is marked, with X the site of the accident during the descent. The obvious, narrowing couloir in the middle of the southwest face of Epperly was climbed in December 1994 by Erhard Loretan to make the first ascent of the mountain. He returned in December 1995 to solo it again for a film. The Standard Route on Shinn finishes up the gently angled snow slopes on the right. The ridges leading from the Epperly-Shin col to either summit remain unclimbed. *Damien Gildea*

Tom Nonis in the west-facing couloir leading to the Epperly-Shinn col, November 2005. *Nick Lewis*

Epperly-Shinn col, west face, attempt and accident. Tom Nonis and I were dropped off in the cirque to the west of Mt. Epperly on November 23. We planned to climb the west face of the Epperly-Shinn col, with the idea that after having reached the col we might be able to attempt the first ascent of Mt. Epperly's south ridge and/or the first ascent of Mt. Shinn's northwest ridge. Leaving camp at 6 p.m. on the 25th, we skied to below the west face of the col and started climbing at around 7:30 p.m.

Our route went up a 55° gully to the right of the icefall and, where the snow quality deteriorated, moved onto mixed ground. The buttress consisted of good quality quartzite, which was easy to protect and allowed us to move together for the majority of the route. The temperature was most of the time around -25°C, with no wind. However, at around 2 a.m. on the 26th we lost the sun and donned more clothes, to cope with dropping temperature and increasing wind.

Toward the top of the gully we moved leftward onto a terrace, where the angle dropped to a more manageable 45°. Here we spent three hours searching for a bivouac site, as we were unable to find any ledges big enough or flat enough for our tiny tent. The wind speed increased, and both of us suffered minor frostbite.

Finally, at 8 a.m., we discovered a split in a stable serac at 4,100m, which allowed us to set up the tent. We had climbed 1,500m.

On account of the high wind and extremely cold temperature we stayed put for 28 hours,