

double-summit of La Silla by early afternoon, realizing the first ascent of its west face—what a great climb!

The long rappel session has us back to the glacier late evening. The entire climb is done without any previous preparation. El Bastardo is the first route on that marvelous face. The name is the idea of Mario Walder, who wasn't baptized by his hometown priest because he was a bastard.

Later we enjoyed windows of good weather and climbed to some nice summits: Torre Egger, Cerro Standhardt, Aguja Rafael Juarez, St. Exupery, Aguja de la S, and El Mocho.

THOMAS HUBER, *Germany*

Poincenot, Banana Wall. After studying the region in hopes of opening a new route, we found a picture in the *AAJ* showing this magnificent north face with no line up the fractured center, between Old Smugglers (800m, 5.10+ A1/2, Crouch-Donini 1996) and the Potter-Davis (550m, 5.11 C1, 2001) lines. This was the start of our adventure, which brought us to climb those wonderful granite cracks.

After getting useful information in El Chalten, thanks to Carsten von Birckhahn, who showed us nice photos of the face and gave beta on the approach, Sacha Friedlin and I started on January 11, 2008, for a one-push attempt. After a 17-hour roundtrip in Canadian winter weather that slowed us, we climbed only four pitches of mixed climbing up the face after the long, snowy approach.

Five days later, on January 16, the forecast announced good weather coming the 18th. We didn't wait and started from Chalten at 7 p.m., slept at Agostini camp 10km farther, and started at 10 the next morning for the remaining four hours of approach. Under bad weather at 11 p.m., above the couloir between Aguja Kakito and Poincenot, we spent three hours chopping an ice ledge. The next day, after unsuccessfully trying to sleep through heavy spindrift, we climbed slowly up icy cracks to reach a good bivy site at the end of pitch 6, having fixed our two 60m ropes above. Perfect weather on the 19th allowed us to finish the wall (taking our ropes with us), continuing to summit, and then descending the Whillans-Cochrane route on the other side, in a 24-hour push.

We placed no bolts or pitons, so the route (800m, VI 5.11a M6+ C1) is free of gear, even at belays. It is very sustained, as nearly every pitch is in the 5.10 range, with a few cruxes of 5.11a. We French-freed in a few spots due to icy cracks—these sections would go free in warmer weather—and encountered mixed climbing on the first three pitches in the Aguja Kakito couloir and again on pitch 6. The M6+ mixed crux (pitch 3) involved unconsolidated vertical snow below overhanging rock passages, but could be avoided by climbing a one-rope-length direct line between pitch 2 and pitch 4, avoiding the unfriendly first bivy site. With that variation the next party would have to do mixed climbing only up to M4.

We named the route Banana Wall because of the curving geometry of its high-quality granite cracks that graced almost every pitch.

FRÉDÉRIC MALTAIS, *Québec, Canada*

Poincenot, complete west ridge (DNV Direct) and Blood on the Tracks, free ascent; Desmochada, variation to The Sound and the Fury. In 2007 I was in the Torre Valley with a large group of

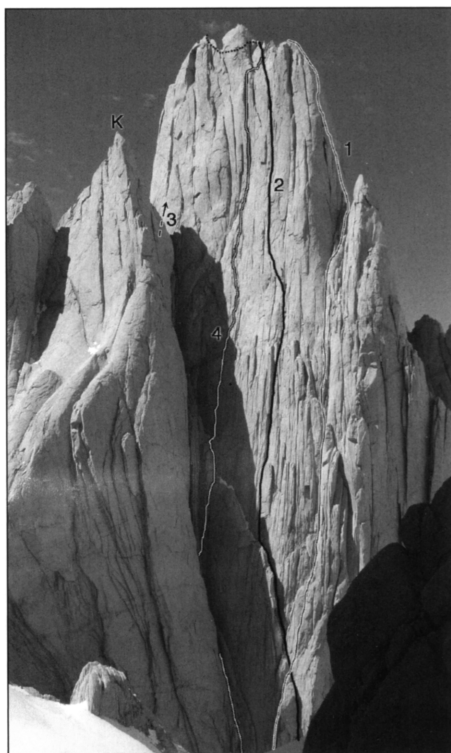
Canadians. The weather was cold and dismal, making for less-than-ideal alpine climbing conditions. My stay was coming to a close when, through the swirling clouds, the west ridge of Poincenot caught my eye. My trip was done, but I vowed to return and try the line.

In mid-January 2008 I found myself in the Torre Valley again, this time with 20 year-old Jason Kruk. We are best friends and share a youthful enthusiasm about climbing and are always willing to get ourselves into some trouble. With a perfect three-day good weather forecast, I suggested the Poincenot line. Jason agreed.

The first day was mentally the toughest. It became obvious why the line had never been completed. The lower ramparts of Poincenot are composed of kitty-litter granite, Joshua Tree at its worst. By nightfall we neared the Fonrouge-Rosasco and Southern Cross routes. The next day we followed the Fonrouge-Rosasco to the summit and rappelled the Carrington-Rouse. We spent three days on Poincenot: two on the way up, one on the descent. About 30-40% of the route is new. The complete west ridge of Poincenot was originally attempted by a Polish party in 1986, the year I was born. We jokingly named the route the DNV Direct (1,500m, VI 5.11+ R/X A1) after the District of North Vancouver, the happy suburb where we grew up.

Next up was Desmochada. We hoped to climb something on the tower all-free on lead and second, without jumars. There is an enormous ledge at about 1/4 height, clearly delineating the lower-angle climbing below from the steeper business above. On the ledge Jason and I scanned the terrain above, looking for the line most suited to free-climbing. We climbed a slight variation (700m, V+ 5.11+ A1) to The Sound and the Fury, a Freddie Wilkinson and Dave Sharratt route. We diverged from the original line, because it looked too thin to free. Our variation's crux involved a thin corner followed by a punishing finger crack. We took a couple of falls throughout the two-pitch variation, but restarted from a no-hands stance each time. At the top of the tower, Jason's leg cramped up in an offwidth and he hung on toprope. We topped out at dusk and rappelled through the night in a gathering storm, shivered for a few hours on the big ledge, then walked down a terrifyingly loose gully to camp, thoroughly wasted.

While on Poincenot, Jason and I spent time staring at the beautiful north face of Rafael Juarez. Freddie Wilkinson drew us up a topo for his route, Blood on the Tracks (600m, V 5.12), that he established with Taki Miyamoto, Dave Sharratt, and Paul Turecki. Sharratt and Wilkinson had freed every individual pitch at 5.12 but hadn't climbed the route free to the summit, in a push. [On their original complete ascent they used some aid. Miyamoto, Sharratt, and



Poincenot's north face: (1) Northwest Pillar (1986). (2) Old Smugglers (Crouch-Donini, 1996). (3) Potter-Davis (2001; approaches from other side). (4) Banana Wall (Friedlin-Maltais, 2008). (K) is Aguja Kakito. Mario Walder



Jason Kruk following the crux pitch of the team's variation to to The Sound and the Fury, on Desmochada. *Will Stanhope*

Wilkinson returned later and freed the individual pitches they'd previously aided—Ed.] Colorado hardman Mike Pennings joined us for our first attempt, but we were stormed off four pitches up. After a day of rest Jason and I tried again, this time freeing to the summit. I fell once on the crux pitch, pulled the rope, and sent second try. Jason followed clean, and the whole route was climbed free for both the leader and the second, without jumars.

For me this trip was a dream come true. There was a gung-ho crew of climbers from all over the world, always

willing to roast a sheep and drink a few Quilmes cervezas. The weather was perfect, and the cracks were ice-free, perfect for free climbing. We tried hard, and we had fun.

WILL STANHOPE, *Canada*

SOUTHERN PATAGONIA, CHILE

TORRES DEL PAINE NATIONAL PARK

Cerro Escudo, Taste the Paine. In December 2007 and January 2008, with a minimum of rope fixing and no fixed camps, Dave Turner spent 34 continuous days on the east face of Cerro Escudo, soloing a new route (VII 5.9 A4+). Above the 1,200m wall, Turner continued up the technical, 300-vertical-meter ridge to the summit. In addition to impressive style and difficulty, Turner was the first to climb the face and continue to the summit. See Turner's feature earlier in this *Journal*.

Almirante Nieto, Calambrito, to sedimentary band. On January 31, 2008, Daniel Darrigrandi, Nacho Grez, and I approached the west face of Almirante Nieto from the Bader Valley, the most unknown big wall valley in Torres del Paine. Only a few expeditions have climbed routes in this valley, and many new routes and some first ascents await serious climbers.

Almirante Nieto is a huge mountain that has three west-facing walls, and we don't think any routes existed on the wall where we climbed. We departed base camp at 4 a.m. and took three hours to reach the base of the wall, heading up a slabby drainage with snowpatches to a prominent right-facing dihedral that looks like a banana. In the upper half, at the big roof we traversed to the right and continued to the base of the black rock. The climb ends where the sedimentary rock starts, as its poor quality makes it almost impossible and too risky to climb. We climbed six pitches (300m, 5.9+ R) on great granite, including finger cracks, offwidths and chimneys. It was a great climb, though many sections were unprotectable.

We descended by traversing right, and found a direct and easy way to rappel.

HERNAN JOFRE, *Chile*