Huandoy-Chopicalqui

Wolfgang Stefan

Harald Nave, my wife and I drove with our friends Eva Krayss and Dres Schild with his fiancé Evi in 2 'Beetles' to Huaraz.

20.5.76. Eva's friends from Dunga transported our luggage with their Toyota Land Cruiser to Yanganuco where we camped on the second Laguna at 4000m bothered by mosquitos and rain. Yanganuco is situated above Yungay where 30,000 people died when a huge stone avalanche destroyed the whole village in 1970.

21.5. Unfortunately the donkeys and the Ariero (donkey driver), which had been promised to us in Huaraz did not arrive. Harald persuaded one of the Arieros who transported potatoes over the Yanganuco pass to the Santa Valley. Four donkeys and 2 horses were loaded. We left Yanganuco camp finally at 3pm in the direction of Huandoy towards a Base Camp under the E glacier basin of this 6400m mountain. One of the horses fell over on a steep traverse but luckily neither was the horse hurt nor the load damaged. At 6pm the donkeys refused to go any further.

22.5. The Ariero was not prepared to continue to the Base Camp. Twice we had to carry 30kg loads the last 200m up to the Base Camp site.

23.5. All 6 started for our first objective, the 5740m Pisco, on which we hoped to acclimatize for the higher peaks. After the traverse of a block glacier we climbed a steep moraine and established a high camp at 5200m.

24.5. In a snow-storm we tried the ascent, hoping that the weather might improve, but were forced to give up. The girls had organized a trek around the Cordillera Blanca and we had to descend to Base Camp the same day.

25.5. The porter who promised to carry the equipment for the trek down was already waiting. The weather improved and I returned with Dres and Harald to the high camp which we reached in the dark.

26.5. After an early start we soon arrived at the saddle of the ridge. Sometimes we had to break trail through deep powder snow. At 10am we were on the summit of Pisco (5740m) with a splendid panorama from Huascaran, Chopicalqui, Chacraraju, the high peaks in the N, to our next goal just in front of us – Huandoy. The glacier seemed terribly broken by crevasses except for the dangerous part which was used by the Italians in 1975. In the evening we were back at the Base Camp.

27.5. We enjoyed Dres's cooking and prepared our material to attempt Huandoy. In the afternoon we departed with heavy loads for the glacier at the foot of the E face of Huandoy. While Harald fetched the rest of our gear Dres and I prepared the first 300m through the broken glacier. We left a fixed rope on a steep ice-pitch.

28.5. We started early from the advanced base at 4800m. We soon reached our turning point of the previous day where we had left some gear. Our loads became heavier and the sun was very hot. With difficulty we found a way through the labyrinth of crevasses climbing over thin snow-bridges. Clouds were covering our mountain. At 4pm we reached a good site for Camp 1 at 5350m. The weather cleared again.

29.5. It was a long time before we started. Only a small bivouac tent and



63 Chopicalqui on the way to Camp 2, Chacraraju behind (This and next photo: W. Stefan)

some food supply was left behind. Through deep snow we reached the foot of the steep slope and couloir leading to the Garganta, the saddle between the S and the main summit. The snow conditions improved, only near the rocks we found the typical porous ice of the Andes. Through a gap we could see far under the surface the remains of fixed ropes, which the Italians had used in 1975. The daily clouds protected us against direct sun radiation during the climb in the couloir. Cold winds in the Garganta were a problem for Dres who had no double boots and could not feel his toes any more. At 5900m we put up Camp 2. Harald assisted Dres to rub his feet to prevent frost-bite, while I had to pitch the tent before it got dark. In spite of the cold we passed a

comfortable night in the double wall thermo tent which our English friend from Lima kindly lent us for the expedition.

30.5. A clear day dawned; after 2 hours of preparation and cooking we left at 7am. At 6100m Dres was again getting trouble with his feet and he stayed behind for some time while Harald and I broke trail towards the last steep slope. Six hours were needed to climb 500m but we were rewarded with a grand view from the main summit of Huandoy (6400m) where we spent a long time. The way down was much easier and we decided to climb the lower but impressive looking W summit next day prior to our descent. We returned to Camp 2 just before the sun disappeared behind the mountains at 3pm.

31.5. Snow-fall, storm and fog made us descend in the morning. We had a long rest and plenty to eat at our Camp 1 site. The weather improved and we continued to the Advanced Base. We struck the tent and returned with the complete gear to the Base, racing with the dark.

1.6. Two French climbers from Grenoble arrived, who also wanted to climb Pisco and Huandoy. Later we learned that they had to retreat from the steep traverse under the Garganta as snow conditions were very poor. Our 2 porters had not arrived so we took most of the load ourselves leaving 2 boxes ready packed behind. In the evening we reached Yanganuco in heavy rain.

2.6. Harald drove to the gates of the national park to bring the porters who had to fetch the remaining loads from the Huandoy Base. In the evening heavy rain fell again and snow covered the lower hills.

3.6. The weather had improved. While the packing was completed we told the 2 porters to walk without loads along the newly constructed road towards Chopicalqui. Driving was very rough. We left one 'Beetle' at the campamento (road construction camp consisting of a small hut). Dres had also to walk and we tried to drive up as far as possible. First crossing a thick tree line and then

64 The summit of Huandoy



through high Andean grass we passed the old Spanish camp from the 1971 Huascaran N ridge expedition. The traverse of the stone-covered glacier coming from Chopicalqui was easier as expected. After a long talk and an increase of pay from 400 to 500 soles we persuaded the porters to carry to the end of the S moraine. A levelled camp site at 4900m left by the Spanish saved us a lot of work. Dres erected the tent while Harald and I explored the first part of tomorrow's route over the glacier.

4.6. We left Camp 1 at 6am in good weather. The snow conditions were excellent till we reached the first plateau. Fog hid our view higher up on the W ridge where the snow was deep and dangerous. The whole day was spent in reaching a suitable place for Camp 2 at 5900m. It cleared up. The ridge above us looked very steep in parts and we had doubts about our success.

5.6. At 7am we finally left the camp. Breaking trail was very exhausting but the danger of snow-slides was much less than yesterday. A vertical ice-wall forced us to the left. With the dead-man, belaying was possible in spite of the deep snow. At 1pm we reached the summit where we spent one hour, the mist soon started to rise. Back in Camp 2 we struck the tent and descended to the moraine, with a beautiful view of Huascaran. Erecting the tent and cooking kept us busy long into the clear full-moon night. After 2 days Dres had to leave for Switzerland, but we were happy that all our plans had come to a successful conclusion.

Garhwal Himalaya—the Bhillangana Valley

Peter Mould

The *raison d'être* of the majority of articles in the *Alpine Journal* on the Himalaya is the conquering of yet another virgin! The purpose of this article, however, is not to catalogue the exploits of a party of 5 club members led by Jon Mellor on a 4-week low-cost holiday in Autumn 1975. Indeed, in relation to the original objective of a peak in the Tons Valley in Uttar Pradesh, it must

be rated as a failure. The exceptionally heavy and late monsoon, which badly disrupted communications throughout the Indian Himalaya, coupled with the limited time available, made sure that even in terms of maximum height achieved the expedition record was undistinguished. Rather the object is to describe the opportunities for small and even Alpine-style parties in this readily accessible and recently de-restricted part of the Garhwal.

The party — Jon Mellor, David Lintott, Peter Mould, Dudley Read, and Bill Wade — flew to Delhi (making full use of low-cost tickets) where we were well looked after by Captain and Mrs Robbins of the British High Commission. (In order to contain costs, and minimize anxiety and uncertainty, it is essential to have a local contact to handle purchase of provisions, transport to the mountains, accommodation, etc. None could have been more helpful than the Robbins.)

Driving from Delhi, our final attempt to reach the Tons Valley, some 70km N of Dehra Dun, was along the line of the Bhagirathi Valley on the road from Rishikeshi to Uttarkashi, the home of the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering. Progress was finally halted, near Tehri, by a still active landslide. Switching the expedition's objective to the Bhillangana was a hurriedly contrived contingency plan. Tehri, soon to be submerged under a giant hydro-electric scheme, lies at the junction of the Bhillangana with the Bhagirathi. For 60km the Bhillangana forms a green wedge of terraced fields, forests and idyllic Alpine meadows penetrating the S flank of the most westerly section of the Garhwals.

Our choice of Tehri as starting point was doubly fortunate, not only because of the scenic attractions of the area, but also because of the wonderful help we were given by Mr M. L. Shah the magistrate. He located porters and gave us invaluable introductions to officials en route which resulted in our never being without a guide, interpreter and somewhere to stay (rest house or school) at night.

The E Garhwal is of course better known because of peaks such as Kamet and Nanda Devi, but in the W are Badrinath and Kedarnath, both around 7000m, and the great N-draining Gangotri glacier. Khatling, where we made our base camp in a pleasant ablation valley at 3800m, is surrounded by a pro-

65 Looking N and E from the slopes of Bhetiara ka Danda (Photo: W. Wade)

