

The American Andean Expedition of 1954 nears summit of Chopicalqui in Peru. Summit's magnificence indicates why mountain climbing holds allure.

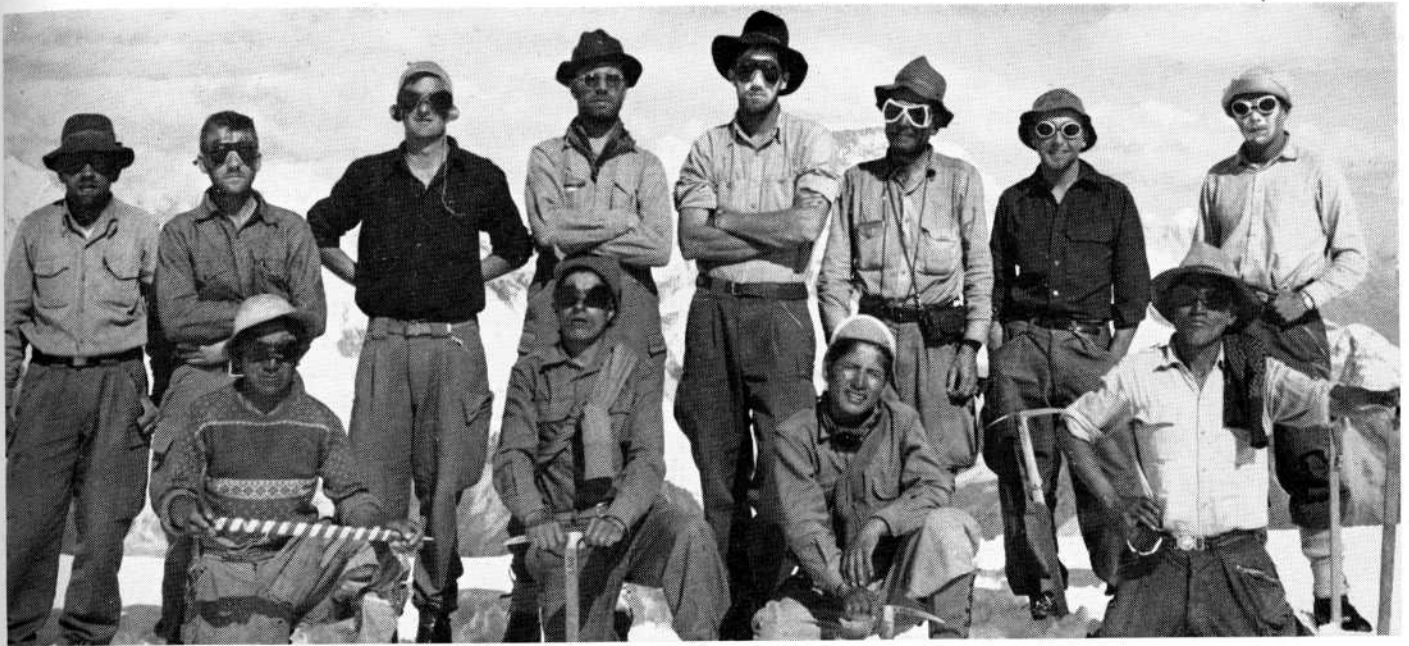
# Conquests in Peru

The author, an outstanding student at O.U. and now graduate student at University of California, has been climbing mountains for a long time. Last summer was one of his toughest—he was a member of an expedition that conquered one of Peru's highest peaks.

PHOTOGRAPHED AND WRITTEN By LEIGH ORTENBURGER, '52bs

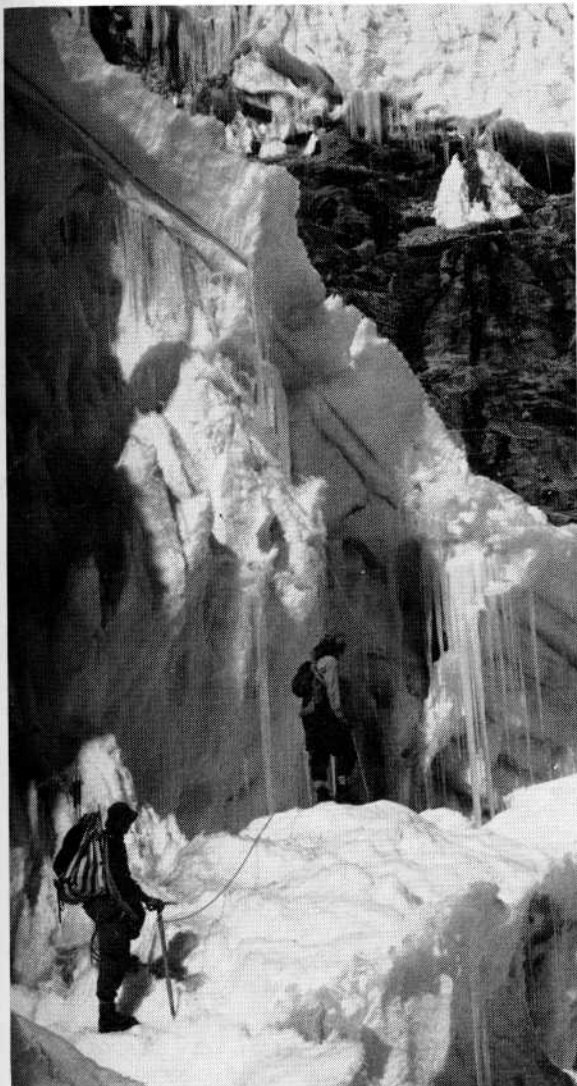
FOR nearly a century mountaineers have been attracted by the Andes of South America. Here they found innumerable ice covered giants, unclimbed, relatively accessible with good weather predominating, and not protected by the political difficulties of the Himalayas. Yet it was not until the Austrian expeditions of 1936, 1939, and 1941 that the most spectacular section of the Andes was explored. These expeditions brought back stories and pictures of some of the most remarkable mountains in the world. In the Cordillera Blanca alone there are some 28 peaks above 19,500 feet.

At the beginning of 1954 eight of these twenty-eight peaks remained unclimbed. From firsthand information and from a study of the maps, it was found that four of these eight, the west and south peaks of Nevado Huandoy, and the two peaks of Chacaraju, could be reached from one central canyon, the Quebrada Yanganuco. Five more peaks, Chopicalqui, Pisco, Yanna-paccha, and the east and north peaks of Huandoy, could also be reached from the same canyon. So the ambitious plan was evolved: set up a base camp at the head of the Quebrada Yanga-

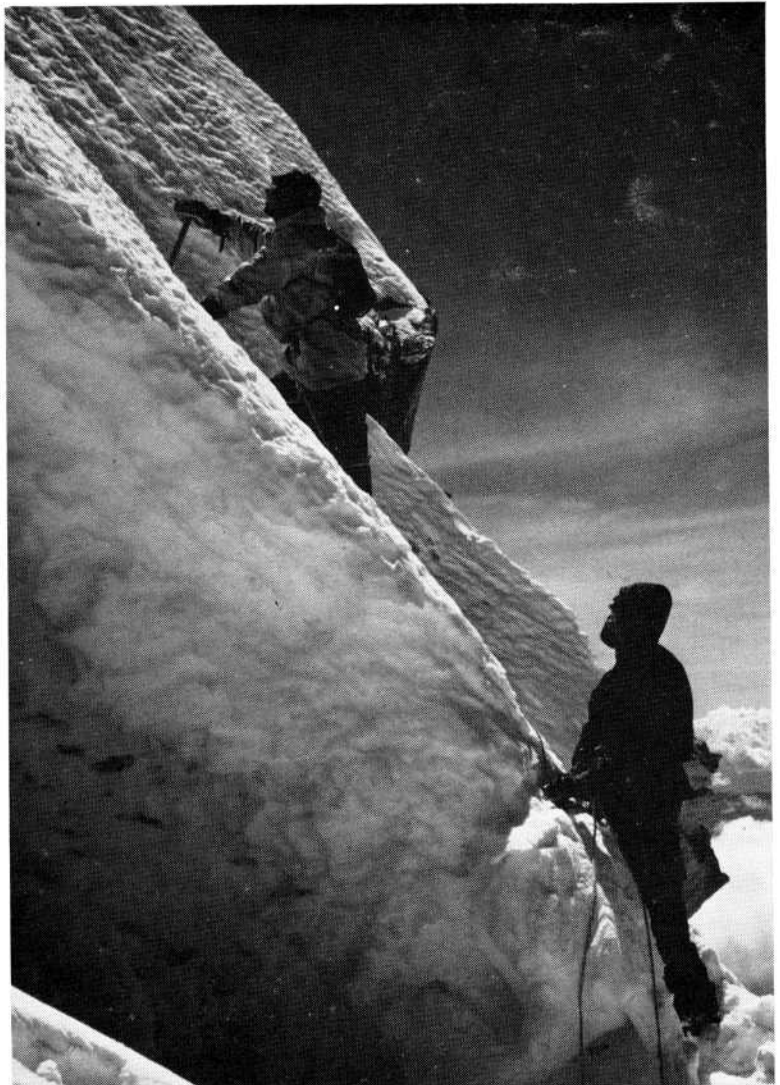


Expedition members were A. E. Creswell, Leigh Ortenburger, '52bs, Graham Matthews, John Oberlin, George Bell, Fred Ayres, Dick Irvin and David Michael (standing) and Peruvian porters in foreground. Among

Expedition's accomplishments—first ascent of highest unclimbed peak in Peru—20,853 feet. Expedition members came from all parts of U. S. Ortenburger is doing graduate work currently at University of California.

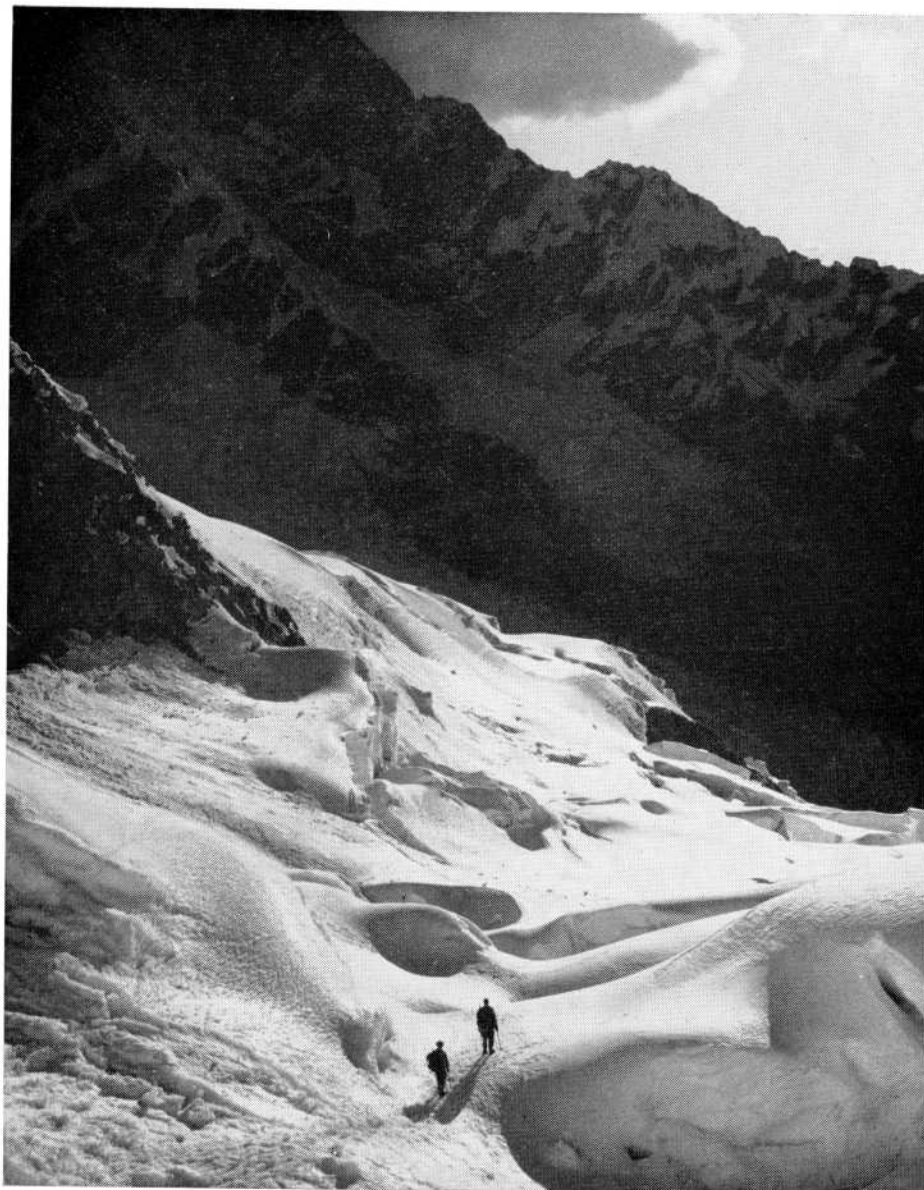


On the climb, Dick Irvin and David Michael pause in the icefall of Chopicalqui, Peru's fifth highest mountain peak.



With clouds at their feet and the summit of ice and snow covered Chopicalqui before them, Dick Irvin and Graham Matthews have reached 20,000 feet in climb.





As the sun starts its descent, climbers David Michael and Graham Matthews also move down the frosted side of Chopicalqui.

Rugged grandeur of South Peak of Huascaran looms up before George Bell and Peruvian porter, Felipe. Peak is 22,205 feet.

nuco and attempt at least most of these peaks. In addition we hoped to have sufficient time at the end of the summer to try the north and south peaks of Huascaran, the two highest peaks in Peru.

With the decision reached, in December we began the months of preparation which are necessary for every expedition. In our case the details were coordinated by vast numbers of air-mail letters since the geographical distribution of the "American Andean Expedition, 1954" was nation-wide: Dr. Fred D. Ayres of Portland, Oregon; Dr. George Bell of Los Alamos, New Mexico; Alexander Creswell of Oakland, Oregon; Richard Irvin of Berkeley, California; David (Georgia) Michael of Athens, Georgia; W. V. Graham Matthews of Springfield, Massachusetts; John Oberlin of Cleveland, Ohio; and Leigh Ortenburger, '52bs, of Norman, Oklahoma.

There were two interesting results of this nation-wide character of our expedi-

tion: no one member had met all the other members and no leader was chosen or even deemed advisable. When June finally arrived, Fred and Cres flew to Lima a week ahead of the main contingent of five in order to expedite our shipment of food and equipment through the intricacies of the notorious Peruvian customs. John Oberlin was due to arrive in Peru a week later than the rest of us.

At 5 a.m. on the 15th of June our DC-6 swooped down through coastal winter fog to the Lima airport. After an encounter with the Peruvian press, we hurried to the Hotel Crillon where we found a message from Fred and Cres. It stated that all our equipment had cleared customs. The only remaining task was to load our food and equipment on a truck and head for the mountains.

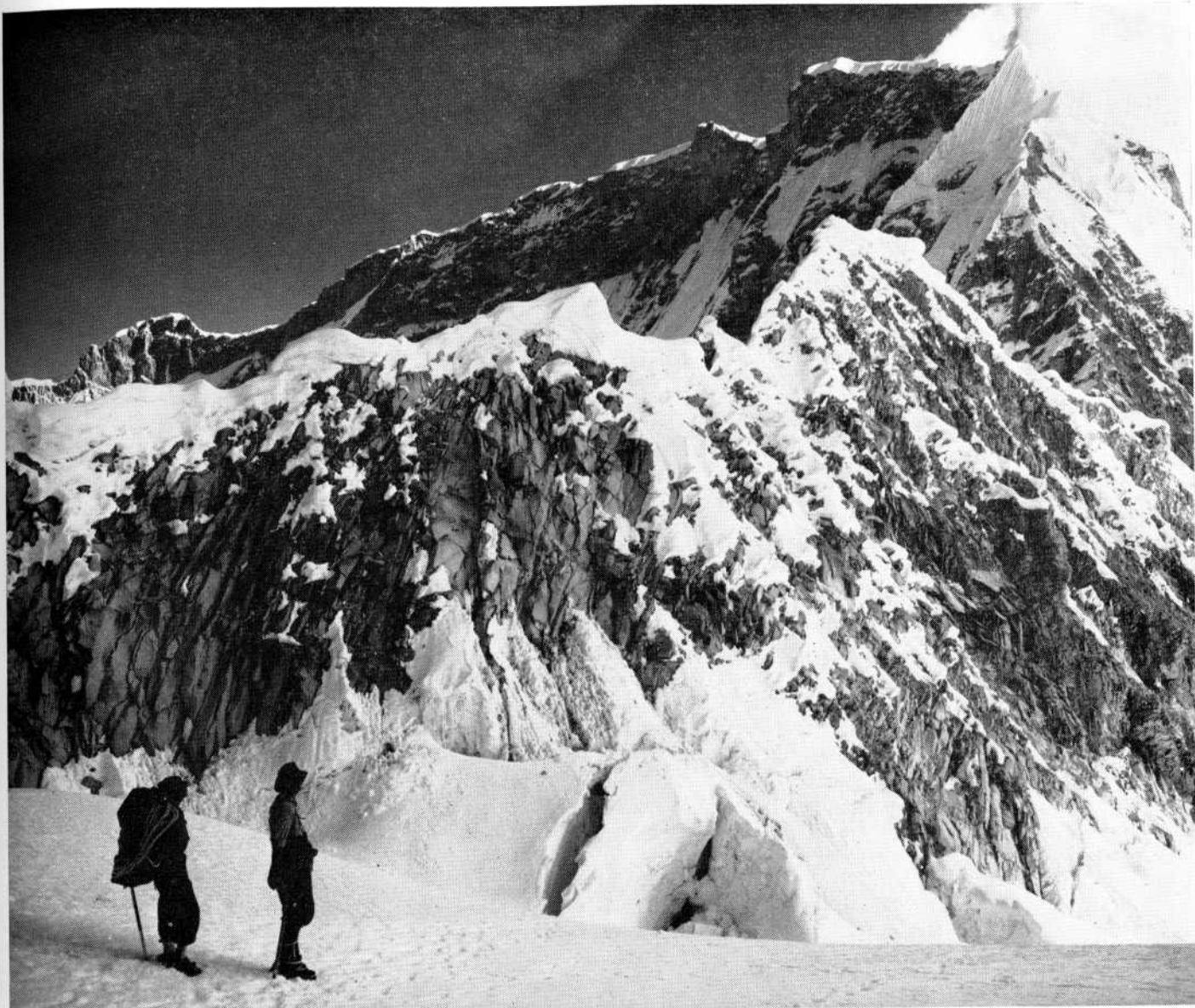
This was unbelievable! No previous private expedition had ever had such incredible luck with the customs. Since the ad-

vance party had made all the necessary arrangements there was no need in our wasting time in Lima.

That same evening George and Dick left Lima in our equipment truck for the town of Yungay at the foot of the Cordillera Blanca. The other three of us left the next morning, arriving in Yungay after a twelve-hour drive. That evening was the first time as many as seven of us had ever assembled in one place at one time. We also met our porters—Eliseo, Felipe, Miguel and Eugenio.

Our immediate problem in Yungay was to locate a man to supply us with burros for the sixteen-mile trip up the Quebrada Yanganuco where we would establish our Base Camp. Usually it takes about a week to get this kind of thing accomplished, but we were lucky in finding a man who could supply us with twenty-five burros for the next day.

By 3 a.m. of the 19th the porters had



the burros loaded and we were off. About noon we called a halt to the caravan at the previously selected site for our Base Camp. It was a pleasant spot, a rarity for the Cordillera Blanca, at about 13,200 feet, with a spring nearby for safe drinking water.

The first two days here were spent setting up tents, sorting equipment, and taking hikes in order to get accustomed to the altitude.

For the rest of the summer our schedule was the same. We would calculate the number of days required for a peak, pre-package food for that number of days, and then set off in the attempt. Between climbs a day or two would be spent at Base Camp resting and enjoying the simple pleasures of green grass and flowers, fireworks and bacon.

Since some acclimatization is essential in order to climb peaks of 20,000 feet and over, our plans were to climb first two small peaks.

Our first objective, Yanapaccha, 17,914 feet, was the smallest peak in the area, but it had never been climbed. On June 22 we started out with the porters to establish a high camp so that the peak could be tried the next day.

It was a beautiful day and we had spectacular views of Chacaraju on our way to camp. In the early afternoon we reached the last comfortable place for a camp short of the glacier at 15,250 feet.

Up early the next morning we had rare opportunity for sunrise pictures of the Huandoy group. After a few hundred feet of talus covered slabs we gained the gentle glacier stretching up to the face which leads to the summit. The snow was soft and the step kicking was tiring, but we made good progress. Crossing one crevasse and climbing the steep final face, we found ourselves on the summit ridge no more than 100 feet below the summit cornice. To add to the dangers, the ridge was covered with

eighteen inches of definitely unstable powder snow. With words of encouragement from the second rope, I advanced toward the top after making certain that I had a good belay. Twice in the last fifty feet the top portion of the snow cracked and slid a fraction of an inch. Literally quaking in my boots I reached a point close enough to the very top to satisfy me—I could touch the top with my axe and look over it to the Amazon jungle beyond. It was not a spot to linger. I hurried down to the others and we decided that there was no sense in exposing anyone else to these dangers. Sufficient time was left in the day to make the descent leisurely and enjoyable. We were all pleased with our first success.

Reaching Base Camp at 9 a.m. we were pleased to find that John Oberlin had arrived. We were now at full strength for Nevada Pisco and the East Peak of Huandoy.

Continued page 28



December 27. Mrs. Coleman served her sorority, Delta Delta Delta, as president and was a BWOC at O.U. Coleman, a law student at the University, was president of Phi Delta Theta fraternity and is a member of Phi Alpha Delta honorary legal fraternity.

Miss Carolyn Sue Lamirand, '54ba, Norman, and James E. Carter, Durham, North Carolina, were married December 17 at Norman. The couple will make their home in Norman where both are employed at Central State Hospital.

ADDRESS CHANGES: Don C. Wood, '54eng, 2906 McKee, Fort Wayne 5, Indiana . . . Lieut. Clay Benton Bartrug, Jr., '54bus, 4305th ASU, Texas Military District Headquarters, Austin 14, Texas . . . Robert K. Overstreet, '54arch, 11022 Third Avenue, N.E., Seattle, Washington . . . Jon R. Withrow, '54eng, Box 75, Florey, Texas . . . Alfred Harting, '54eng, Box 507, Ulysses, Kansas . . . Lieut. L. B. Thompson, Jr., '54bus, 118 West 7th Avenue, Apt. 4, Cheyenne, Wyoming.

a feat—they climbed from 18,000 feet to 21,000 and back in one day over a very difficult route.

The next day when it became clear that no agreement could be reached as to the proper route on the south peak Dick and I descended to the 18,000-foot camp. Graham wanted to stay another day to make the third ascent of the West Peak. Late the next afternoon he joined us. By now we had all been at this camp so long we were beginning to get shell-shocked. If someone rustled a sleeping bag, the cry of "Avalanche!" would be heard and three people would try to get out of the tent door simultaneously.

We were grateful to get back to base camp the next night. The ascent of the two peaks of Huandoy completed our objectives in the Yanganuco so we sent two porters down to Yungay to get burros to bring all our food and equipment out of the mountains.

On the night of August 5 we were all back in civilization after 48 days in the Andes. We still wanted to try the two peaks of Huascaran. Although both had been climbed three times, they were still worthwhile objectives.

On August 8 the seven of us and our porters carried loads to establish the next camp which would be halfway to the great saddle between the two peaks of Huascaran.

At about this point things began to get complicated. A party of Peruvian climbers joined us and set up their camp about 100 yards from ours. This was the same group that had climbed the South Peak in 1953, using the route found by Mexicans. On descent the Mexicans had left a fixed rope over a particularly difficult ice wall and it was this that allowed the Peruvians to make the ascent four days after the Mexicans. They were opportunists of the first order.

Clearly they hoped to do the same again, only this time they were interested in the North Peak. They figured to follow our route, if we found one, and benefit from our steps and fixed ropes. Late in the morning of the 10th, three of us left, followed by the Peruvians. After some excellent ice work by George, we reached a point only a few hundred feet below the saddle. It was high enough to see that there were no further difficulties.

We pushed upwards the next day. After spending several hours in a zig-zag route in the first 1,000 feet above the saddle, we finally broke out on the broad slope leading to the summit. We were now beginning to feel the effects of the altitude. The breakable crust was exasperating. The slope seemed interminable. When I meas-

## Conquests in Peru . . .

Continued from page 19

Since I had climbed Pisco in 1952, the East Peak now attracted my interest. On the next day the other six started out for Pisco while Georgia and I tried the East Peak. Trying the spur which leads to the north ridge, we ran into difficulty almost immediately with the snow and ice plastered rock. After some difficult climbing, we topped the steep portion of the spur. But by now it was too late—to continue meant a bivouac for which neither of us was very eager. So we roped off the ridge and were soon back at camp. The others had already returned from Pisco.

At Base Camp two days were consumed in pre-packaging food and sorting equipment for the attempt on Chopicalqui. In 1932 the Austrians made the first and only ascent of this peak, at 20,997 feet the fifth highest in Peru, by the west ridge. He hoped to be able to repeat this climb. Our plan was to establish two camps on the way to a high camp at an 18,600 feet col from which we could reach the summit in one day.

We may have set a record that day in that all eight of us reached the 21,000 feet summit. When the mists temporarily cleared we could see nearly the entire range from Huantsan to the south to Nevado Santa Cruz to the north. In a jubilant mood we descended.

Now we had only two objectives left in the Yanganuco: the Huandoy group and the incredible Chacaraju. It was not clear in what direction our efforts should be directed inasmuch as we had not seen anything that looked much like a route on either peak. After some serious discussion the next day it was decided to split up into two groups and reconnoiter both possibilities. I was in the group that was to investigate the possibilities of Huandoy. Our unanimous decision was that there was no even moderately safe route due to avalanche danger.

We arrived back at Base Camp a day earlier than the Chacaraju reconnaissance

party. The next afternoon we learned that they had even less luck than we. They found no feasible route. Chacaraju comes uncomfortably close to the "unclimbable" class. Gloom surrounded our discussions at the campfire that night. John Oberlin's vacation time had run out and he started his return trip to the U. S. the next day.

More in desperation than anything else, George, Graham, Georgia, and I decided to have at least a look at the left hand side of the east approach to the Huandoy saddle. On July 21, we left for Advance Base with our porters.

Early in the afternoon of the 27th, after some hard climbing and excellent teamwork, the saddle was reached without incident. Following a lengthy breakfast the next morning, we peered out of our tents—there was the everpresent wind together with cloud and light snow. The other two decided to wait another day before trying the peaks.

However, not wanting to waste the day, I thought I would go up and finish kicking steps to the high col in preparation for the climb the next day. As I neared the col, the snow became even worse than before, being a breakable crust with knee-deep powder beneath. Before too long I was on the col looking down 6,600 feet to the beautiful Lake Parron. Looking up at the West Peak (20,856 feet) I could see that it was a straightforward matter of chopping steps up a steep snow face. The thought then occurred to me to kick and chop steps toward the summit until I tired, thus making things easier for the next day. Somewhat to my surprise a couple of hours later, I found myself at the summit. It was almost a mathematical point of snow with a fearsome view down the sheer north face. The descent was made without difficulty.

Up the next morning at 9:30 a.m., we were astonished to see Fred, Cres, and Georgia arriving from below. They had decided to join us and climb the north peak in one day, one long day. It was quite

ured off the last few steps to the top, I knew why the others had hurried down, spending only a very few moments on the summit. At the very top there was the strongest wind I had ever met in the mountains.

Darkness overtook us about halfway down but fortunately a full moon lighted our way. When we reached our camp at 8:30 p.m., we knew that we had put in a day's work. George had hot tea waiting for us. Because of the failure of the batteries for his electric socks, he had had to turn back at about 20,000 feet. There was no justice, since it was largely due to George's skillful icework that we were able to reach the saddle.

The North Peak is a much more straight-forward climb than the south peak. We reached the summit in only four hours, but we were greatly disappointed by the clouds which enveloped us at the summit.

This ended the climbing of the American Andean Expedition 1954. The descent to Yungay was completed in two days. After packing up our gear for shipment back to the United States we all went our separate ways, for the summer had come to an end.

All in all the expedition was a success. It lacked the elements of excitement such as serious illness, a great fall, or even frozen feet or fingers. The first ascent of the highest unclimbed peak in Peru (the West Peak of Huandoy at 20,853 feet) had been accomplished. We had not climbed the South Peak of Huandoy or Chacaraju. The former can certainly be climbed from the main Huandoy saddle. But Chacaraju is another story. It will require an all-out assault by a strong party who are willing to accept a certain amount of risk. To climb either of its two summits would be a major accomplishment. The Cordillera Blanca will remain as one of the finest climbing areas in the world regardless of the fate of this particular summit, only one spectacular peak among many.

### *Will Reds Attack? . . .*

Continued from page 14

language is so foreign to the natives as to be virtually unintelligible, but they are in control of Formosa.

#### *Potential Points of Friction on Formosa*

Perhaps the greatest point of friction is the language difficulty.

A second great point of friction might swell from the fact that innumerable native Formosan Chinese have been ejected from their homes to make room for the new administrators.

A third area of difficulty may easily stem from the imposition of new technicalities upon an old pattern.

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## Hal Muldrow, Jr.

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