







# Primitive Back Country Interests Climbers in Land of Incas



CLIMBERS FILE past a cold mountain stream in the Quebrada Yanganuco, an Andean valley.



A CLIMBER pauses at a beautiful lake located at the 13,500 foot level of the pass at Punta Union.



NEVADO TAULLARAJU, as seen from South Arete. The Cordillera Blanca, according to the local men, is breathtaking and is often called the "Switzerland of Peru."



THIS CLIMBING SCENE was taken by Camphausen while on the way to the summit of Yanapacha at an altitude of about 17,000 feet.



LIFE IN THE camps was primitive. Here cooks and porters prepare a meal. In the foreground can be seen meat from slaughtered sheep being prepared for the dinner table.



RUSS HUSE (left) and Fred Camphausen pause on the summit of Yanapacha, one of three Andean peaks the climbers reached. Two other attempts by the expedition failed due to extremely bad climbing conditions.

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beneath the shadow of Peru's infamous killer mountain that two China Lake men, Russ Huse and Fred Camphausen, recently journeyed to scale three mountains in the Andes of the Cordillera Blanca.

They are both members of the China Lake Mountain Rescue Group and many times in the past have been called upon to rescue a stranded hiker or mountain climber in the high Sierras.

The trip to Peru was made as members of an expedition conducted by Mountain Travel, Inc., of Oakland, Calif. This organization is dedicated to conducting expeditions all over the world and caters to the interests of climbers, mountaineers, trekkers and outdoor adventurers.

#### Time Out for Sightseeing

After a plane trip from Los Angeles to Lima, Peru, the 15-man expedition first did some sightseeing in Lima and then boarded buses for the 250-mile trip to Huaras. The narrow dirt road to Huaras is steep and very winding. After crossing a 14,000-foot pass the road levels out on a high, bleak plateau. To the east of this plateau rise the splendid peaks of the Cordillera Blanca.

"Peruvian drivers who man the highly motorized, stripped-down vehicles are a passionately competitive lot who rely largely on the probability of miracles rather than on the application of brakes," Huse recalled. "At times I think that was the most dangerous part of the trip."

Evidence of the landslide and earthquake was everywhere in Huaras. "The town was partially destroyed, but still it didn't suffer as badly as Yungay, which was totally destroyed," Camphausen said.

The entire valley is dotted with shrines and crosses for the dead.

#### Route of Expedition

The mountain climbers' route followed the Quebrado (canyon) de Llanganuco to Portachuelo Pass, located at 15,585 feet. From this point they turned north into the Quebrada de Huaripampa. From this vantage the slopes of awesome Nevado Talliraju (19,239 ft.) glistened high in the distance. Other Andean giants such as Nevado Huandoy (21,104 ft.) and Chicraraju (19,800 ft.) could also be seen.

The expedition continued northward along a roadbed of the ancient Incan highway, bordered by rock masonry and ramparts still in evidence after hundreds of years. The climbers reached the Col of Punta Union and turned west and ran the long downward distance of the Santa Cruz Valley past the Peruvian Indian village of Caras, then turned east and forged into the heart of the Cordillera Blanca as far as Lake Perron, at 13,860 feet.

Several miles from this area, a high camp at 16,000 feet was established on the ramparts of Aguja Nevado Oeste and the summit was attempted the following day. The climb ended at 17,200 feet, 300 feet short of the summit, when insurmountable technical difficulties combined with the late hour of the day forced the climbing party to turn back.

#### Three Summits Reached

Of the five mountains attempted by the group, Huse and Camphausen were able to attain the summit of three: Nevado Yanapacha Oeste, 17,121 ft.; Rajacacca, 16,931 ft.; and Nevado Pucaraju, 17,000 ft. Yanapacha is located in the Llanganuco Lake area, and the other two peaks were approached from the Quebrado de Huaripampa.

An altitude of 18,200 feet was attained on Nevado Pisco before the attempt to gain the summit was abandoned in the face of heavy snow-fall with only 800 feet remaining to be climbed to reach the top.

During the 30 days spent in Peru, Huse and Camphausen came into contact with many Peruvian Indians. "I noticed that the general way of life and living conditions of the Peruvians is not unlike that of our own western Indian tribes," Camphausen commented. "The squalor and poverty of the Indians is depressing and evidence of their condition was made more visible as we progressed on our journey, particularly as we descended from Huaras to Lima."

#### People Were Friendly

"But the people are friendly. The word 'gringo' is heard frequently in the towns and pueblos and is generally an appellation of good nature," he elaborated.

Huse pointed out that the people are apparently more self-sufficient in the rural settlements of the mountainous areas. "Despite the primitive dwellings and dirt plots, they raise wheat and barley, potatoes and lima beans, and own pigs, chickens, sheep and there is the inevitable burro or two."

One of the more interesting things to the expedition members was the manner in which homes are built—precariously slanted on the sides of the mountains. "The diminutive farm plots comprise colorful patchworks of greens, bronzes and yellows that delight the eyes. More than once I found myself yearning secretly for my more pastoral days and regretting the plastic, institutionalized way of life I now lead," Huse observed.

#### Varied Ailments Suffered

During the trek most of the men suffered from various ailments, including sore throats, colds, chapped lips and so on. However, two young women, wives of two of the expedition members, remained amazingly fresh and pretty throughout the entire trip, even at extremely high altitudes. "There is indeed something about woman's ability to handle this sort of thing," Camphausen commented, "and it made a believer of me on the self-preservation qualities of ladies."

The leader of the expedition was a strange mixture. "His name was John Filsinger. A man of about 53 years of age, and a veteran of many great climbs in the Andes and the Himalayas.

The expedition ended Aug. 15. "It was an experience, and one I shall not forget. The bravery of the people living under the shadow of death, and the majesty of the Cordillera Blanca impressed me very much. If my legs hold out, I'd like to return," Huse said.

PHOTOS BY FRED CAMPHAUSEN



THE RECONSTRUCTED Temple of the Sun at Pacha Camac is located south of Lima. These ruins, which are thousands of years old, are on the old Incan highway.



EARTHQUAKE DAMAGE is visible in this photo of a portion of the Basilica, the only structure left standing within a large area in the City of Huaras. Most of the center of town was leveled by the May 31, 1970 earthquake. The Cordillera Blanca (White Sierra) is in the background.



OPEN AIR MARKET vendors in the City of Huaras ply their wares. Livelihood in the more remote areas may come from the daily sale in Huaras of a small quantity of produce.