

# ACONCAGUA

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1. Aconcagua – the story.....	2
2. Travel expenses.....	24
3. Simplified map.....	25
4. Photographical map.....	26
5. Data.....	27

## Wednesday, December 9<sup>th</sup> 1998, Stockholm - 0 m / 0 ft (1)

I got in a cab at four thirty that morning. I was a bit tired. I had been at a friend's apartment in the center Stockholm, Sweden. My going away party had gathered a few friends, drinking Spanish red wine - Faustino I, a bottle of Swiss white wine, a bottle of Swiss strong liquor, a bottle of Chivas Regal 21-year and having lots of pizza. In the end we were just three people left and we spent hours talking about everything and nothing.

I had been home in Sweden since the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September. It was time to get on the road again. The big difference this time was that I was a lot more organized this time. I had nothing left to do last night except wait for morning to break. I felt a bit sad to have to leave so soon, I had only been back for three months, and during that time I had hardly seen my friends or family. It had been a strict business visit. Being totally focused on the objects to be taken care of is the only way to go if you want to reach your goals. If you don't think about your family and friends you won't miss them, it works for me when I need to be totally focused! It doesn't mean I don't care about them, they are just outside my body.

With more than 100 kilos / 220 pounds of luggage divided on five bags I got charged for excessive weight and a fee because I had changed my departure date. It wasn't very funny since I had spent a lot of money the last weeks. If it wasn't for the credit cards I don't know how I would have managed! Well, after having the expenses paid for I made sure I got a window seat up in the front, where it's more space for your legs and where the smokers don't hang around.

During the sailing adventure (November -97 until September -98) I had gotten used to having a laptop computer for communicating with the world. For this trip I had a pocket computer instead. The Philips Velo had the advantage of being smaller and yet still fully operational. At Heathrow airport in London I got myself a Canon IXUS zoom camera, as big as a pack of cigarettes and as a complement the Canon AS-1. Now I only needed a digital camera in the size of the IXUS and as fast.

If there is an airport to spend money, Heathrow it is.

When I was boarding for my flight to Caracas in London the guy behind the check-in counter looked at me and said:

- "This has to be your lucky day!"

Then he gave me my ticket and asked me to board the aircraft. I didn't understand what he was talking about. On the ticket my seat assignment 22A was crossed out and instead he had written 8C. I got to fly first-class!!! Very nice indeed. I had my own TV screen, great leather seats that were totally declinable. They served me a three-course meal on fine china. I had everything from orange-juice to Martini with ONE ice-cube. All this was new to me and it made flying a very enjoyable thing. I think I have to start flying 1<sup>st</sup> class all the time...

When I arrived in Caracas and stepped out of the plane I expected my friend to be there. She wasn't there and it took two hours and several phone calls to find her.

## Thursday, December 10<sup>th</sup> 1998, Caracas – 960 m / 3150 ft (2)

All day was spent running errands. I got my airplane ticket to Buenos Aires, Argentina; I was going there to meet up with a friend and to catch the buss to

Mendoza where I would meet the rest of the crew for the climb up to the summit of Aconcagua. The bus ticket was already bought by one of my Argentinean friends. I ended up spending a lot more money for the return ticket Caracas - Buenos Aires - Caracas than I had expected. Sigh... all of these expenses were really annoying. There had been an offer that ended on December 9<sup>th</sup>! It made my ticket about 300 USD more expensive. After tickets were paid and everything settled. I walked over to the Swedish embassy to say hello to some people working there that I had gotten to know on earlier visits to Caracas. After saying hi to the people at the embassy I made a visit at Alejandras office before I went to workout at a gym.

In Venezuela it rains pretty frequently (one or two showers a day during some periods) as it does in most parts of the tropics. On my way to a Spanish school, Centro Venezolano, I was hit by one of these showers and I got totally soaked to the bone. It actually rained so hard that traffic stopped. Water was rushing along the streets and cars like a wild game of sex. Police and fire departments were rushing through to redirect traffic and fix streetlights and clogged drains.

I made a phone call to my friend Guillermo in Argentina and said that I would come for a visit on Tuesday. He had a hard time believing that, but said I was welcome – just make a phone call.

I feel that I really have to get starting with my training after the climbing, and that one of the sailing yachts gets sold. Otherwise the climbing won't be paid for. My colleague is in the Caribbean with a possible buyer at the moment.

The adventure continues...

But, what do I really want? I don't know myself – I'm searching everywhere I get. The important thing is to have fun and to make sure that there is a positive flow of money.

### Saturday, December 12<sup>th</sup> 1998, Caracas – 960 m / 3150 ft (4)

On Monday I will fly to Buenos Aires and that feels real good, because right now I feel like I invited myself to Alejandras at the totally wrong time. Like I'm in her way. At the moment I would even like to go back to sailing, even though there were so many problems during the end of last summer. To be on a boat is a great way to get away from it all. It is also a very soft, kicked-back way of living. Before going back to the boats I plan to study Spanish for at least a month or so.

I don't know what's going on today, except I am constantly hungry. It's pretty amazing how other people can live. In Alejandra's family it's full speed ahead from seven a.m. to eleven p.m. There are absolutely no time or space to be alone. She is 28 years old and lives with her nine-year-old son and her mother together with two siblings, one of whom has a family of her own. All in all there are seven people in the house. It strikes me as a rough way of living, how can they stand it?

After breakfast I went out for a walk.

One of the days problems was that there wasn't any water in the house, how was I going to shower?

Sometimes I wonder if it wouldn't have been easier for me to get a room in a hotel. That way I wouldn't have to care about a bunch of people around me, something that can be quite straining. Having people telling you that you can't brush your teeth in the kitchen and so on.

### Monday, December 14<sup>th</sup> 1998, Caracas – 960 m / 3150 ft (6)

I was lucky to get a ride to the airport with some people from the Swedish embassy. Since leaving Sweden my appetite had been blown out of proportions. At the airport, waiting for the flight I sat down at a restaurant and had three large servings of pasta. Unbelievable! I usually eat quite a lot but this time I surprised even myself. When I initially ordered I asked the waiter for a large portion and when I later called him over for an equally sized second helping he gave me strange looks of disbelief. I could see some of the kitchen staff giving me glances while I was finishing the seconds. Well, when I called the waiter over for thirds even I shook my head in disbelief. The kitchen staff had probably never seen a guy my size finish an amount of food like that. After my great dinner I bought two bottles of Absolut Vodka, one to give away as a present and the other for the peak of Aconcagua. This time my flight was in economy class, sigh. It was very uncomfortable mainly because of the very tense guy next to me who was wearing two sweaters and a jeans jacket in the very warm aircraft. His legs were spasmotic and he looked like he was going to kill someone soon. It wouldn't be surprise if he were a drug-smuggler or convict. I hardly ate or slept at all.

### Tuesday, December 15<sup>th</sup> 1998, Buenos Aires – 0 m / 0 ft (7)

I reached Buenos Aires and called Guillermo up. He could hardly believe that I was in Argentina. In any case I got in a cab and soon stood at his doorstep at 10 a.m. That was totally cool with him since he didn't leave for work until then anyway, and he works with a firm of lawyers! That evening we went to the movies and watched Armageddon and didn't get home until real late.

### Wednesday, December 16<sup>th</sup> 1998, Buenos Aires – 0 m / 0 ft (8)

Going to bed last night resulted in Guillermo being late for work today, he didn't get there until noon. I started off with a buffet lunch at a nice place next door to where Guillermo works. I ate for about two hours, before I walked over to a gym and worked out for awhile. Later I took a long walk to the Swedish embassy to introduce myself. I meet an extremely arrogant and snobby third secretary. I have been to many embassies around the globe but never encountered such a hostile person employed as this one.

I then went to an Internet-cafe to check my e-mail to the price of 20 USD an hour! Later I walked all over Buenos Aires (a gigantic city) to find myself a particular type of Timberland sandals, size 44. My size was nowhere to be found, finally when I got to a genuine Timberland store they told me that, the particular model wasn't imported in my size at all. AAAAAAHHH!!!!!!

How come no one else knew about that? Bad internal information flow seems to be one of the biggest problems in the world today. This was just another example of that.

I was back at Guillermo's office at six p.m. feeling like my legs were made of gel. We went to a Computer mall almost next door to get him some things. I then noticed that they of course had an Internet-cafe there and I who had been goofing around all day

before I finally found one! But seriously, do you know where you can find an Internet-cafe in your neighborhood?

We then went to a fitness-center in a luxurious hotel where Guillermo works out. The monthly fee was 150 USD!

For the stretching we went to play some computer-games and ate chicken-burgers and took the subway home.

I realize I've spent most of the day walking around like a goof ball, when I could have utilized the time better, been more efficient and probably been able to finish a dozen more things. I hate when this happens.

Guillermo and I went shopping with his wife, Veronica. Who later cooked for us and a friend of her. We had wine and Vodka. I made them try some Swedish snuff that I had brought with me. This turned out another late evening.

### Thursday, December 17<sup>th</sup> 1998, Buenos Aires – 0 m / 0 ft (9)

Woke up at eight, strange dreams all night. I dreamt that a friend and I were chased in a wild gunfight. I also remembered that I had a strange dream in Caracas where a crocodile and a woman chased me! I Said good bye to Guillermo after two intense days and got a cab around ten a.m. to another friend, Carolina. Spent all day with her shopping Christmas-presents. Is there anything more boring and going shopping with women? It takes ages and they never buy anything, sigh!

We got back to her apartment ten past five; I was out on the street in a taxi twenty past five. A quick goodbye and off. The traffic was very heavy and a quarter to six I jumped out of the taxi, which had moved about 30 meters / 100 feet in seven minutes! I got to the bus terminal no more than eight minutes before the bus departed. It was on the edge.

Three hectic days in Buenos Aires:

Looked for Internet-cafe's.

Looked for Timberland sandal in a size not available.

Been to the Swedish embassy.

First time since -96 I meet Guillermo and Carolina.

Worked out twice.

A lot of walking.

And now I'm on my way to a big adventure without a clue what will happen after the climbing.

One funny thing I have observed is that I when I have weighed myself lately the scales have been showing 82 - 83 kilos / 182 – 184 pounds. If that is correct I have gained 3 kilos / 6,5 pounds in a week.

When I left Sweden I weighed 79 kilos / 175.5 pounds and 9.9% subcutaneous fat. I'll have to weigh myself in Mendoza to verify my weight.

### Friday, December 18<sup>th</sup> 1998, Mendoza – 756 m / 2480 ft (10)

The bus traveled all through the night and I got to Mendoza at eight in the morning. I got in a cab to the hotel, where I met Eric from Mexico. He had gotten there half a week ago. He was sitting down having breakfast when I walked in. I joined him for breakfast, when we were done we walked up to our room for a siesta. Later we

walked over to an Internet-cafe to check our mail accounts. You would get Internet-access and dinner for 10 USD. I went to a tailor to patch a whole in my smaller sleeping bag and to fix a pair of trousers.

We also got bus tickets for the whole group, which consisted of the two of us, Helena (Brazil) and Petter (Norway). The bus would take us from Mendoza to Punta del Inca at 2 720 meters / 8 923 feet above sea level. Punta del Inca is at the foot of the mountain itself. The bus was scheduled to leave Sunday.

Eric rented some extra mountain equipment.

I got on a trustworthy scale, same figures. I really had gained some weight – but where did it go?

That night Petter from Norway arrived and the three of us went to a buffet style restaurant. It was the best such restaurant I have ever been to. On request they fried up steak, fish, boiled fresh pasta or cooked pancakes. Plus they had three help-yourself type tables. Everything was superb. A very nice red wine was as natural.

### Saturday, December 19<sup>th</sup> 1998, Mendoza – 756 m / 2480 ft (11)

A day of walking. First we went to pay entrance fees for the national park in which the mountain is situated. Unfortunately they needed the passport of every member in the group. Since Helena hadn't arrived yet we couldn't pay. Then we spent half a day trying to find power bars for me. When we finally did find them, they were so expensive that I didn't buy any. In one store where we got fuel for the camping stove-burners there was a gorgeous girl working. The rose of Mendoza, whose name was Alicia. She had warm brown eyes, flowing wavy hair and a thin summer dress covering a velvet golden skin with laced leather-sandals... Caramba!

Later in the Internet-cafe I received news that we had sold Blue Marlin (one of the boats I owned together with my colleague Kjell). This was news I had been waiting for since leaving Sweden. Now I finally knew that I could afford this current expedition to the top of the highest mountain in South America. After shopping camera batteries and a camera-stand I took a siesta at the hotel. Helena arrived at seven that night. Eric, Helena and I met in La Paz, Bolivia in 1996. Eric and Helena had since met up in Europe in 97 or 98, I don't know exactly. So they were really happy to see each other again. Petter and Helena met in Africa during the summer of 98. He had also been to her place in Brazil before coming here. After they had all engaged in a serious hugging feast for awhile we all went to shop for food.

When I go on expeditions like this one I always get light and easy food like pasta, noodles, biscuits, chocolate and such. Helena wanted to get fruit, dry milk, bacon, rice, corn, peas etc. When I said I'd like some noodles and loaded up with 50 packs of instant noodles she stared at me like I was a nut case.

Dinner that night was had at the same great restaurant as yesterday. All three of them said "no thanks" when I offered them wine so I ended up drinking the entire bottle myself. Like everyone else they were making remarks about the amount of food I was eating. Finally Peter and Helena left me; Eric kept me company though. Helena had made two earlier attempts at reaching the peak of Aconcagua. She had failed both times, so she told us a little bit about what to expect. She works as a "professional" climber in Brazil. And one of her goals is to become the first Brazilian woman to make what is called "Seven Summits". That is when you have reached the highest point on each continent. Up until this point she had conquered Elbruz

(Europe), Kilimanjaro (Africa), Mt McKinley (North America), so she certainly had a lot of experience. I did get concerned about her mental stability though. She got very irritated by me asking many questions. I also told her that I thought I might carry all my gear the entire route instead of using mule's parts of it. I often ask plenty of questions, some of which might appear irrelevant, but in fact these "irrelevant" questions reveal unconscious answers that might not be clearly visible otherwise. She had a minor hysterical attack, a two or three on the Richter-scale, saying she'd been traveling and stressing all day and didn't need a lot of silly questions. She talked about how badly she wanted this mountain. This is an inexcusable behavior, especially as an expedition-leader. There are no stupid questions. It seemed like she was so anxious to get the peak since she had failed twice before. It also struck me that she did not seem interested in the group; it was she all the way! She had said she had failed the previous two attempts because of the people around her. This time she had planned to do it all by her self, but then the three of us had showed up and she sort of just went along with it. As I see it: If you accept a group, then individual progress and success take the backseat.

### Sunday, December 20<sup>th</sup> 1998, Mendoza – 756 m / 2480 ft (12)

I got out of bed at seven and with heavy steps I walked down the stairs to meet up with the others. We went and paid the park entrance. To save time we took a taxi there and back. Coming back we carried all our stuff to the restaurant and then had breakfast. Then we walked over to the buss stop, tossed our bags in the buss and took off. We kicked back and relaxed. When we got off the bus hours later, by the mule-place whom were going to take most of our luggage up to base camp, Plaza de Mulas, 4 300 meters / 12 900 feet above sea level. We accidentally grabbed someone else's bag in the rush getting off the bus. When we discovered this mistake the bus had already left and we were out in the bush. We hoped the poor bastard whose bag we had "stolen" would be able to figure it all out and work his / her way back to this point.

For fun we weighed the backpacks we where to carry to Base Camp. Eric had 15 kilos / 33 pounds, Helena and Petter had 18 kilos / 39 pounds each, while I was carrying two bags totaling 33 kilo / 72 pounds. I re-packed my stuff for what seemed like the hundredth time and then we hitched a ride to Puente del Inca where bought lunch, an enormous schnitzel-burger each. At lunch we also met a Norwegian guy that had gotten water in his lungs as a result of walking all the way from the entrance off the national-park, to Plaza de Mulas with a backpack weighing 40 kilos / 89 pounds in one day. A very severe disease, that can seriously hurt a person. So he had to abandon the thought of reaching the summit this time. Hard work at high altitude can be very dangerous. We got rides further on to the park entrance, where we had to show the passes we had bought earlier that day. Both Helena and Eric seemed to have gotten tired of my ways, and me. Maybe I do come off as a little bit macho in the ways I do things. But that's how I am. It also seemed like it was they and I. I like Petter, he is calm and easy to be with, but the other two are different – something cultural?

After we ate the schnitzel-burgers. I had to repack my backpacks again; despite the fact that I wasn't done Helena took command and walked off with Eric and Petter. She said I only had to follow a path behind the house.

That made me real angry, FUCKING angry. You don't start of an expedition splitted up!

I walked along in the snowy weather that had come around in the last hour and by then the snow covered the ground. I didn't know if I was walking in the right direction either. They had at least a twenty minutes lead so there were no visible tracks. All paths were also impossible to spot. After thirty minutes I felt like turning back to ask for directions. I kept on for a little while and came to a small suspension bridge. That was when I remembered I was going to pass a bridge according to a small map printed on the backside of the entrance permit. I had totally forgotten about the map and now things started to look a little brighter. From time to time I wished they would leave a sign or so in the snow, but no. It was snowing hard, so hard that visibility was down to 15 meters / 50 feet. The map still made a world of difference. The scale of the map was such that pinpointing a location was impossible but you got a feel for the area and an idea of the trail route. According to the map the trail should run along the river. But I couldn't see it so I stuck right next to the river. This meant I had to cross many obstacles in the mountainous landscape. Finally I spotted a number of tents and knew I had reached the first tent camp at 3 300 meters / 10 826 feet above sea level. That was Confluencia. As I walked into the camp I saw where the trail ran into it, I had by no doubt taken a much harder route by sticking to close to the river banks. I was happy to get my backpacks off my back since it needed some adjustments. I set up my tent in which Eric and I would sleep. Made sure I threw in stuff like sleeping bag, cameras, water bottles, some food etc. I had started my march at 3.25 p.m. marching for one hour, resting five minutes, marching one hour, resting ten minutes etc. I arrived three minutes past seven. The others had arrived approximately forty minutes earlier but not yet cooked dinner. A kind man next to us shared some food with us. His name was Hector and he was from Mexico. We ate the cold pasta he offered, didn't even have energy enough to heat it. A headache came creeping up on me after dinner. One moment it was there the other minute it was gone and so it went on. I carried two sleeping bags (one inner and one outer), I decided that the outer (warmer) one would be enough and after eating some crackers and drinking some water I went to bed; to the sound of the mighty rapids thundering not far from the tent. I went up in the middle of the night having to take a leak, after holding on to it for quite some time.

### Monday, December 21<sup>st</sup> 1998, Confluencia – 3 300 m / 10 826 ft (13)

I woke up at six thirty but didn't get out of my sleeping bag until eight thirty. I made noodles for Eric and me. I also had crackers, cheese-sticks and two servings of broccoli-soup. After breakfast I repacked my backpacks.

The idea for the day was to stay put until three or four p.m. and then walk one hour to the last camp before Plaza de Mulas. That would allow our bodies to rest and build up energy for the following leg, which would take about eight hours. Helena later got information that there were no sources of fresh water for the remainder of the walk so she figured it would be better to wait a full day here and then go straight to Plaza de Mulas. We all agreed that this was a good idea. This also gave us more time to adjust to the altitude, which definitely is a good thing. I still suffered from headache. I didn't really know if it was because of lack of oxygen, water or both. I was eating and drinking as much as possible. I also had started drinking the water in the stream that

came from a mountaintop somewhere in the distance. The wind up here on the mountain chills you to the bone, makes your fingers go numb. But the sun is really powerful, no shadows and the tent is like a sauna. I had sent all my books with the mules, so I wouldn't reach them until tomorrow at the earliest. All I had to make time pass was my harmonica and a Jew's harp, but at the altitude it was hard work. The Jew's harp also bored me pretty quickly.

Our little group of four was now definitely split in two. We didn't eat together and the other three were inside Helena's tent all the time. I was always in mine or out repacking my backpacks or just walking about.

I felt that many occurrences before I got to South America had influenced me more than I ever could imagine.

I had started to become irritated easier and more aggressive, it seemed like I had reacted just like younger kids do when there is for example a family crisis. They become more violent etc.

My aggressiveness and irritation is hardly noticeable to other people than myself, since I'm a fairly calm person to start with.

It's only that I'm 25 on my way to be 26... Could this be a delayed "child-crisis" that I have been holding back since I was little?

I don't know... I don't think so.

I have lots of new adventures that I plan to do, but why? Maybe they are a way of finding more people that are like me?

Maybe I should be happy with the friends I already have?

After turning down an invitation to eat with the others I laid down in my tent, did nothing, just let my thoughts stray freely. Trying to figure out if I should continue alone or not, it felt like I was alone already. After I finished my solitary dinner Helena gathered all of us together after having private chat with Eric. She faced me with an ultimatum:

- Do you want to continue alone or in this group?

She then continued to discuss things she should have talked about before even setting out on this expedition. Everything from that she had experience, Eric didn't but listened to her and learned, Petter had experience and still listened, but I just kept on like night never appeared. She continued stating that even though we had the opportunity to load some of the weight on a mule this day I had not accepted to take weight of my backpack. She believed that I was making lots of stupid things like having Christmas decorations for my tent and having too much weight. What strucked me during this talk was that she too had obviously thought about splitting the group up. The thing is that it seemed like she alone thought all of this out and then made it out like the three of them reached this thought in unison.

What was my answer?

I had from earlier experiences learnt that if you are unhappy doing what you do, you should quit it. Even if this means loosing in the short run. Because even if you loose a little bit of money or what ever else, your personal well being is far more important. Well, to apply this on the current situation wouldn't have worked. Sure, I didn't enjoy the situation as it was. But at the same time I had openly declared that I would take part in an international expedition. If I didn't continue I couldn't tell my sponsors I followed through even if I made the summit. It would also look good to be able to say you took part in an international expedition. The only person I didn't get along with was Helena, the other two I liked. Even though I thought they acted a little bit wimpy

adapting to her and her mood all the time. They ran around her legs like puppies. My answer therefore was that I'd like to continue as a group. And for the sake of the group I would send on a bit more stuff with a mule. I knew I could have made it with all of it, but I have to admit that I was a bit nervous about getting damages to my lungs like the Norwegian guy in Punta del Incas.

### Tuesday, December 22<sup>nd</sup> 1998, Confluencia – 3 300 m / 10 826 ft (14)

We all got up at six a.m. to start what would be a long day. I had a weird dream about trying to hide a dead body with a friend. The scene was in a round tower hotel that didn't seem to have any exits.

We repacked some stuff on yet another mule and set off together at five to eight. The hike took us through a valley that could just as easily been on Mars, it was totally deserted, no life anywhere. I took a five-minute rest every hour to "air" my feet. The others took brakes more like when they felt like it and for as long as they liked. Your most important tool on a long hike or climb is your feet. If they aren't doing well everything can start to go bad. If you are able too change your socks regularly you definitely should. I got annoyed at Helena, supposedly so experienced and claiming to be a professional, that she wouldn't know this. Also that they started of marching with too much clothes on all the time, that they later needed to take of. I never spoke out aloud my doubts about her. I didn't want to stir up hostile emotions, maybe that was wrong?

Petter and I were marching at good speed and made it in six hours total. Eric and Helena were about thirty minutes behind us. During the walk the sun had been relentless and I burned my arms a bit. We all had headaches. Because of the headache I started to double my dose of vitamins. Maybe it would help.

There had been water all the way up to Plaza de Mulas and I wondered where Helena got her information. We paid for the luggage that had been up here to Plaza de Mulas. Everything seemed to have arrived except Eric's Discman, which had vanished from one of the bags. In the Base Camp there was lot of tents and people. Next to me there was two tents of the same Swedish brand, Hilleberg. The people were Swedish like me. Helena had been taking a few aspirins. She claimed it was a necessity if you didn't want a headache. So I decided to take two (1000mg) a day to see if it would make things better.

### Wednesday, December 23<sup>rd</sup> 1998, Plaza de Mulas – 4 260 m / 13 976 ft (15)

I woke up around six-seven, but stayed inside the tent until nine o'clock, by then the sun had started heating the tent up. And by that time it was almost impossible to stay inside any longer. I had been up during the night to take a leak and once early in the morning as well. Eric had been blown away by the clear night skies with the extraordinary amount of stars. Something I was used to. It's odd how spoiled you can get by nature's great wonders. I don't know if the aspirins helped, but I believe I felt better. Around 10 a.m. Petter, Eric and I walked over to a hotel that had been erected about forty minutes away from the camp it self. The sun baked us like turkey's in the oven on the way over there. I had burnt my ears and forearms on the walk yesterday.

So now I had to walk around like Michael Jackson, with white cotton gloves and a cloth around my face like an Arab.

It was a nice hotel and it must have taken quite an amount of mules or helicopters to get all the wood up here to build it. A room was about 50 USD a night and a shower 10 USD. They also had a satellite telephone if you wanted to call any part of the world. The three of us talked to a lot of people before turning back. We got our gear together for an attempt at the peak, food for five days. The first leg would go to Nido Cóndores, 5 200 meters / 15 600 feet above sea level. I think I have too much weight, it will tell.

A slight headache today.

Helena had told me earlier that I wouldn't need any crampons so I hadn't brought any. Now we were told it was a necessity, a climber died last week because he wasn't wearing any. It then turned out that Helena had brought three pairs for the rest of them. I had to walk back to the hotel to rent a pair. But when I got there they were fresh out of crampons. I had to come back the next day. Back in the camp I ate dinner, rice and a tin of meat together with two aspirins. The leftovers I saved for breakfast.

Tomorrow it's going to be 1 000 / 3 300 feet diagonally...

Sometimes they played music in a tent where they rented out mules, next to our tents. I liked it; it took some of the monotony of doing nothing away. But there had to be people who thought that the music was a disturbance in the nature.

I could for sure tell that Helena didn't appreciate me, but it didn't really bother me. I'm going to the top, with or without her.

It was a good thing that there were so many Swedes around. It made one feel more like home. Then I had Hector, the Mexican and Gregg the American (who I met in Confluencia) to hang around with.

I spent more time with people outside my group. It didn't feel right. Well, tomorrow will be a big day and it's going to be fun.

Everything else – OK.

Good Night.

#### Thursday, December 24<sup>th</sup> 1998, Plaza de Mulas – 4 260 m / 13 976 ft (16)

I slept all right except that I needed to step out early in the morning to urinate. I have begun drinking less water at night to stop these nightly escapades outside the tent, but this has resulted in my morning headaches growing worse – which isn't good. My backpack weighed 27 kilos/ 59 pounds before setting out.

Before I started walking at eight a.m. I Christmas decorated my tent. I got to Plaza Canada 4 910 meters / 16 108 feet above sea level ten a.m. Campo Pendiente 5 200 meters / 17 160 feet above sea level eleven thirty and finally, Nido Cóndores 5 380 meters/17 650 feet above sea level at twenty minutes to one. The last couple of hundred meters went really slow. A few steps of walking and then rest, another few steps and another rest.

I had a severe headache, but I had to wait for about three hours before the others got up. During those three hours my head was pounding furiously. In the meantime I tried to eat, drink and I changed into warmer clothing. It wasn't easy to get something

down the throat and no bigger amounts went down. When Eric was up he gave me two aspirins, which helped a little bit. My head was pulsating; I felt very tired, had no hunger and had no energy. Classical symptoms of AMS – Altitude Mountain Sickness. I wanted to start the descent as soon as possible, but I had to wait for the others in order to be able to arrange the kit that we were going to leave.

It was quite dirty at the camp: plastic wrappings, paper, juice-containers and all sort of garbage lying around. What had the people been thinking up here? When all of us were up, we put up Helena's tent and unpacked the backpacks. Eric and I put our kit in a bag and covered the bag with stones, so it wouldn't blow away.

I started to go down three-twenty. I was down at twenty to five. On the way down I was using my boots as small skis, sliding down on the gravel and mud that makes this mountain. It was a lot of fun but sort of stupid since I could easily have fallen and broken something.

To call Aconcagua a mountain has to be a big mistake. It has to be the biggest gravel-pit on this planet, 6 962 meters / 22 975 feet high and only gravel and small stones everywhere.

When I got down my headache was almost gone.

I rearranged my kit and put Christmas-presents, Swedish Dalecarlian horses on top of their sleeping bags.

Two Swedes that had arrived to Plaza de Mulas during the day received Swedish snuff as present.

When Eric and the others was down we started on the Christmas-dinner. Helena gave us a Christmas card each. During the delicious dinner two other Swedes came by, the rumor about the man with Swedish snuff had gotten to their ears. I gave them some snuff of course. I myself don't use snuff; I had only brought some in order to make other people happy like now.

After dinner I sang some Swedish songs for Eric, Helena and Petter.

#### Friday, December 25<sup>th</sup> 1998, Plaza de Mulas – 4 260 m / 13 976 ft (17)

We had powerful gusts of wind during the night and morning brought the dreaded headache.

Breakfast consisted of rice and corned beef. Yesterday Helena and I got into a serious argument when I told her I had brought Diamox (a medicine against altitude sickness) and that I was thinking about using it. She started arguing that I could put the group and myself in big trouble by using Diamox. She claimed it only would "hide" the symptoms without curing them and that I therefore risked getting really sick. But I had checked it out with doctors.

Diamox (acetazolamide) a drug often used in the treatment of the eye condition glaucoma is useful in the prevention of Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS). AMS occurs commonly during visits to 3000-4500m and usually causes a severe headache, exhaustion and feeling generally unwell. Rarely (but even at these altitudes) the condition progresses to cause more serious problems which are potentially fatal - Pulmonary and Cerebral Oedema.

Diamox reduces the headache of AMS and helps the body acclimatize to the lack of oxygen. It also probably reduces the incidence of the complications of AMS mentioned above.

I read some more about Diamox from some brochures I borrowed from Magnus, a Swede in the camp. What was I going to do, take Diamox or not? Despite the Aspirin, my headache never disappeared. Experienced climbers I talked to said nothing bad about Diamox.

Helena was hysterical as usual, acting very unprofessional about it.

Helena herself was eating Aspirin in order to cope with her headache, but why a headache at all?

We had ascended to fast. Generally you shouldn't go above 2 000 meters / 6 600 feet above sea level the first day. You should stay there one or two days and then not ascend more than 500 – 1 000 meters / 1 650 – 3 300 feet per day as long you feel fine, and of course – as long you have the time! We had the time, but she was to horny getting the peak, so she rather planned more days close to the peak (bad weather can make an attempt to the top impossible for weeks.)

At noon it was 28° Celsius / 85° Fahrenheit inside the tent, not to bad when it sometimes was 40° Celsius / 105° Fahrenheit.

I figured that if I wasn't any better tomorrow I start using Diamox, even though it would feel like cheating. And I wouldn't tell anyone if I ended up using it, Helena would just freak out even more.

I had a big lunch at Petter and Helena's.

I talked a lot to Magnus and Peter, the Swedes next door. Had a look in a Spanish Playboy.

After lunch I walked over to the hotel and I finally got my crampons, I planned to try them out on an icy spot not too far from the camp tomorrow. In the dining room of the hotel there is a bunch of flags hanging from earlier expeditions, no Swedish one though. On a Norwegian flag a Swede had written the following: I didn't find any Swedish flag so this one will have to do!

I will hang mine there after the summit.

For dinner I had dog-food, rice and corned-beef.

A man was carried down from Nido Cóndores. He had broken his foot. While I was at the hotel a friend of his had ran around in camp asking if someone would go up and help him out. Only one person in the entire camp would be of assistance. Magnus the Swede in the tent next to mine volunteered. In gratitude he got treated to a huge dinner.

I'm angry with my self because I still have this stupid headache. I have aches in my legs from yesterday's effort.

## Saturday, December 26<sup>th</sup> 1998, Plaza de Mulas – 4 260 m / 13 976 ft

### (18)

I didn't sleep well at all this night, went up for a leak at seven and then I slept till ten. Magnus climbing partner Peter had gotten water in his lungs and a camp-doctor told them that they ought to descend to a lower altitude for one day to see if it would get better. Magnus should go with him if anything bad would happen on the way. But Peter had no problems walking himself and if Magnus walked down and the sickness didn't get any better Peter would have to abort everything, while Magnus would have to come all the way back up alone. A terrible waste of energy. So in the end Peter walked to Confluencia himself, Magnus stayed alone for a try at the peak.

We had lunch together and then Petter and I took a trip up to Plaza Canada 4 910 meters / 16 108 feet above sea level to acclimatize, we spent a few hours up there. Later, back down, we all had dinner together. Petter and I were joking in Scandinavian. Helena who didn't understand got so pissed off that she got up and left the dinner. Tomorrow we will move our camp to Nido. Going to bed that night I still had a headache and figured I would take Diamox when we walked back up to Nido if it wasn't better. I still had aches in my legs.

### Sunday, December 27<sup>th</sup> 1998, Plaza de Mulas – 4 260 m / 13 976 ft (19)

Eric and I left our tent at nine and started packing only the very most necessary stuff and moved on to Nido Cóndores at ten thirty with about 30 kilos / 66 pounds in my backpack I arrived at five minutes to three p.m. I took me forty-five minutes longer than the first time up, this time with 3 kilos / 6.6 pounds more. Weight at high altitude means a lot.

I walked at a very comfortable pace, often stopping to talk to people coming down from higher grounds. It was really windy and cold during the walk. When I got up, I felt pretty good compared to last time. Eric had walked faster than me and had waited for an hour. The wind caused a lot of problems; we could hardly get the tent up. We cooked some noodles and then I got into the sleeping bag with a great headache, had two aspirins and tried to sleep. At six - seven p.m. Eric shouted to me from outside the tent. It turned out; Hector the Mexican needed a few pills of Diamox from me. He was going to higher grounds to help someone off the mountain. He thought that he might need Diamox for this "rescue mission" and I broke the seal on the Diamox bottle and gave him ten pills. Later I myself took three capsules for the first time.

The wind made the tent sway from side to side, impossible to sleep.

The temperature function on my watch only showed a line, it made me really irritated and after awhile I came to the conclusion that the watch wasn't able to show less than  $-10^{\circ}$  C /  $15^{\circ}$  F ! My Casio ProTrek has everything: altitude, compass, 5 alarms, stopwatch, barometer, temperature plus other special functions. Unbelievably it only shows temperatures in the range  $+40^{\circ}$  and  $-10^{\circ}$  Celcius /  $104^{\circ}$  and  $14^{\circ}$  Farenheit! What a big mistake, at least for me at this moment.

I was up to take a leak two – three times during the night. Why didn't I bring a bottle to urinate in? These entire short, short walks in the cold, only two seconds away from the tent only to disrupt the sleep to urinate. Every time I was out I also had to readjust the tent-lines, because of the very strong wind.

I wasn't the only one adjusting tent and tent-lines. Every time I was out I saw someone else doing the same. With no doubt, it was storm-gusts that hit us hard. When morning was about to break the wind finally calmed down a bit so that I could fall asleep. Still the wind was moving the tent from side to side, hitting me in the face. Why did I leave the sleeping pills I had brought for occasions like this in base camp?

## Monday, December 28<sup>th</sup> 1998, Nido Cóndores – 5 380 m / 17 651 ft (20)

Things were starting to become hell. I took two Diamox pills when I woke up and planned to take two more later.

Where the tent poles should have been stopped by extra thick, double layered tent-cloth there were instead holes ripped right through. We were lucky that the tent was still standing upright. When I touched it, it collapsed flat to the ground like a dirty rag. Eric went to fill the water bottles from a small water hole not to many people knew about. The others melted snow for water. We would have liked to share our knowledge about the water hole, but realized it would have been used up within hours if it were public knowledge. About 100 meter / 300 feet away some Swedes had made their camp and I walked over and borrowed some duck tape so that I could repair my tent temporarily. On my way to the Swedes I meet a Canadian I had talked to on my way up yesterday. Someone had helped her with her tent up to Plaza Canadá 4 910 meters / 16 200 feet above sea level. But when she got up, she couldn't find either the guy who had helped her or the tent. She was lucky that she could sleep in another tent over night. She was now on the hunt for her tent.

When I got back an hour later I found out that Eric never went to fill up the water bottles. He hadn't wanted to go by himself without crampons because it was very slippery on one passage. So we went together with sticks and empty water bottles. Then we tried to cook noodles, the only problem being that the water wouldn't start boiling. So instead we had to eat half-hard noodles and lukewarm water.

With this burner I would never been able to melt any snow at this altitude.

Helena wanted to walk up to Refugio Berlin, 5 780 meters/18 963 feet tomorrow and sleep there one night before trying for the peak. I found this VERY stupid. Partly because it drains your energy to be at these extreme hights. Partly because we'd only eaten a meal of noodles a day, some crackers and chocolate. I felt my energy just floating away for every day that passes. I would also never take my tent up there in the condition as it was. No professional climber goes up to sleep at high altitude if they can avoid it! Hector and Gregg were going to try for the peak from this position tomorrow. It would take them between nine and eleven hours.

I spent the day doing nothing much at all, talked to Magnus who had taken a walk up for acclimation.

I had started to plan to go all the way from here to the peak the day after tomorrow. I hadn't brushed my teeth in two days.

I took another 1000 mg of Diamox.

## Tuesday, December 29<sup>th</sup> 1998, Nido Cóndores – 5 380 m / 17 651 ft (21)

We had less wind during this night and I could actually sleep. I Woke up with some serious pains in my head and took 1000 mg of aspirin.

Hector and Gregg set out on the climb at approximately five a.m.

I told Eric that I would give the peak a shot tomorrow morning with or without the rest of the group. He told me that I should tell Helena, but I replied that I wanted to wait and see how things develop before letting her know. When Hector came back down to Nido, Helena was there in a flash to ask questions about trails and weather and such. She changes her mind about sleeping at higher altitude and said that we

should walk straight from here to the peak tomorrow if possible. Perfect, that meant I didn't have to let her know what my plans had been.

A group of four Swedes went down to Plaza de Mulas today. Their electronic weather guide had given them warnings. I think that the real reason was that two people among them felt real bad.

I urinate often, but I very seldom take a shit. And when I do go to sit behind a big stone it's only small round things landing on the ground.

When I move around for water or to go to the bathroom I feel a lot better, but it really wears you out to walk up here. Breathing gets heavy and the heart beats fast and loud.

One bag of noodles for lunch, with Helena's stove, that really got the water boiling. I must have forgotten to adjust my stove for the high conditions or something like that. I was growing sick of noodles, chocolate and loud Argentineans that laugh outside my tent day and night.

The height was really tearing you down and I really hoped the weather would be good tomorrow. The tape on my tent came off and I had to go and get more.

I spent the day, reading, sleeping, urinating and talking a bit. It really bugged me that I forgot to take a bottle to piss in. Another irritating thing is that I didn't take any sleeping pills with me.

I took 500 mg of Diamox. You're supposed to start treatment before reaching the altitude so I didn't know if it helped at all.

For tomorrow I packed the following: Wasa sandwich, chocolate, crackers, 1 liter Absolut Vodka, toothpaste, extra clothing, crampons, two liters of water and clothes in case of an emergency sleep-over.

I put my alarm for two, four, six and eight past four a.m.

I'm starting to get fed up with this. Nothing is happening. No action – No satisfaction!

## Wednesday, December 30<sup>th</sup> 1998, Nido Cóndores – 5 380 m / 17 651 ft (22)

Eric and I started getting ready at four-thirty and before leaving we "parked" the tent. We took out the tent poles, laid it flat on the ground and put large rocks on top of it all. At ten minutes past five we set out on the long climb. As usual Helena and Petter had started in advance, it made me steaming angry. My backpack (which I had tried to make as light as possible) weighed about 10 -15 kilos / 22 – 33 pounds. When we caught up with them they were still searching for the trail, not finding it. That explained why she was in such a hurry to leave this morning.

Here we had a woman claiming to be a professional climber and expedition leader, who hadn't even checked out the trail in daylight before setting out. Everybody knows you have to reckon before hiking. Just, unbelievable. We spent another twenty minutes looking everywhere until two other groups walked past us - they obviously knew what they were doing, so we followed them.

I was mad at myself for not having done the reckon myself yesterday. But I had been so convinced that Helena would have a grip on it all since she had been here twice before. So we really didn't set out until five thirty, three groups in all, everybody with headlights, it looked cool as we struggled up the hillside.

No wind and the stars were out, a perfect morning for this adventure. Two hours later I reached Refugio Berlin 5 780 meters / 18 963 feet above sea level and I could remove my headlamp. I had fallen behind pretty early but I didn't mind walking alone this time.

This was it, the struggle to conquer the mountain. This is where everybody turns into individuals, where the group dissolves. Sure if you have the power to give a "helping hand" you should do so. I didn't have that energy. Ten heavy steps and then a rest for a couple of minutes and it kept on like that. The others seemed to march on at a decent pace. I at least had one of them within visual reach at all times. At the very last possible tent camp, Independencia 6 400 meters / 20 997 feet above sea level I put my crampons on. Only 562 altitude meters / 1 855 altitude feet left to the peak. It felt like it never was going to end, just walk, walk and walk. I felt very weak and couldn't even find the strength to get the camera out. The only thing in my mind was to reach the peak and nothing else however big or small would have to wait. I walked on like a robot, boycotting food. Finally I had visual contact with the peak, about 400 height-meters / 1 320 height-feet left. I could see two – three peaks that possibly could be the one. I finally had my goal visual!

I passed Eric who was in bad condition, even worse than me. He was thinking about turning back. I told him I thought it was good of him to get this far and that there was no shame in turning back if he was to do that. I also said that I thought he should continue, being this close. After this I wasted no more energy on talking. One should never pressure anyone who feels sick and weak – especially at height, it could put the person at extreme risk. He let me know that Helena had put a deadline at five o'clock p.m. If we hadn't reached the peak then, we should turn back no matter how close you were – orders from Helena.

AAAAAHH!

She is a total idiot.

When you're this close it's every man and woman for oneself. Even if it was six and I had another hour I probably would continue, although I would know that sun sets at eight or nine and that the risks then would increase quite a bit. This is part of what the peak of climbing is about to me - the risks!

Pushing the limits.

It would be another thing IF we had agreed on a deadline before trying for the summit.

Succeeding with the goals you set brings enormous pleasure.

About 300 height-meters / 1 000 height-feet I ended up behind a group of four persons and we took turns going first.

100 - 200 height-meters / 330 – 660 height-feet from the top I met Petter and Helena making their way down, I congratulated them.

Petter was feeling dizzy and maybe that was because he also had carried Helena's backpack all the way up and now down! Helena did everything not to fail once again, but to have him carry her backpack! And to call herself a professional climber!

I later heard that she had the guide on Mt McKinley even carry her Brazilian flag to the peak.

Are we talking Wannabe or?

Helena repeated what Eric had told me about the deadline for our group. I didn't really listen. I already had my goal – the top, no matter time.

My steps had gotten shorter and heavier. Two or three steps and rest, two or three more and then another rest. It took at least ten minutes to walk 50 meters / 165 feet. Closer, closer.

With only ten height-meters left, I could see two people from another group standing at the top shouting joyous. At sea level it would have taken me about ten seconds to reach them. But up here it took me ten minutes instead.

Step by step....

Tjohoo, tjohoo, TJOHOOOOOO!

Twelve minutes to four p.m. and I made it! 6 962 meters / 22 975 feet above sea level.

I was lucky, not a cloud on the sky as I was sitting there on the top of the world. I pulled out the Absolut Vodka, the Swedish flag and had another person up there to take the pictures.

A big surprise was when I saw Eric. He had kept going and he reached the top thirty minutes after me, almost knocked out from exhaustion. Yet we felt great. More photographs were taken.

At four twenty we started the descent. It turned out to be really hard getting down. I kept a real fast pace and got to Independencia after two hours where a Brazilian caught up with me when I was resting and taking the crampons off. We walked down to Nido together. This was the only time during the entire expedition that I had company for any length of time. It was great fun and time passed so much quicker. We got to Berlin at seven where I met a large group of Swedes that I talked to for a while. They congratulated and added that I looked a lot less tired than anyone else they'd seen coming from the peak. Especially Petter and Helena had looked beat. I did feel good, except for a bit of dehydration. In fact I had all reasons for feeling good. I had made my goal, Cumbre Norte!

At eight I reached Nido in the company of the Brazilian - Fifteen hours after setting off. I made a victorious scream.

When Petter congratulated me five minutes later I could also give the good news that Eric also had made it to the top.

I was thirsty and hungry, but I was too tired to go and get water and I didn't want to start cooking if Eric hadn't arrived. I decided to save my last noodle meal till breakfast. I went to bed without food. Instead of water I took some pills prescribed for dryness in mouth.

Eric got into camp at ten-eleven at night – he definitely had a long day.

During the night I woke up from several cough attacks that made my throat burn. I heard similar noises from tents all around me, that made me less worried.

### Thursday, December 31<sup>st</sup> 1998, Nido Cóndores – 5 380 m / 17 651 ft (23)

I wrote in my journal and then I finally walked out to get some water. It felt so good to quench my thirst after such a long time.

I cooked noodles and waited for Eric to wake up so that we could pack the tent. Helena and Petter of course had started earlier than we had.

We got going at ten thirty.

Eric walked at my pace in the beginning, but my bags were so heavy and I was slow so he walked ahead after a while.

There's a lot of Asians up here. Like the Korean guy that I met about 150 height-meters / 500 height-feet from the top. He just couldn't make it; he would try again the following day!

Asians often bring their entire families. I find this to be outstanding. Walking down the mountain I met another Korean that offered me dried fruit, It tasted so fantastic after weeks of boring noodles, disgusting chocolate and biscuits.

At one thirty I got back into base camp. I Weighed my backpacks, 40 kilos / 88 pounds.

I got settled in the tent and then I went for a bath with Petter in the little lake by the camp. The water was just above freezing point so we washed pretty fast, the first wash and the first change of clothes – underwear in two weeks. Then I stood in the sun to dry off – it felt awesome. Then it started to hale.

I met Magnus the Swede again, he said that his friend Peter hadn't gotten any better and had to disrupt the climbing. We had lunch at one of the tents serving food where I also played table-football with the locals. We then walked over to the hotel to put my flag up next to the many earlier flags. It took me about one hour to compose a text to write on the flag and to make space for it.

We meet Eric, Helena and Petter there and I had a hamburger before Magnus and I walked back to start the New Year's party. We sat in Magnus tent with a bottle of whiskey and my bottle of Absolut Vodka. It was real nice and I ended up pretty drunk. We took pictures in the pitch-black tent. The flashes made us hallucinate and we laughed our asses off. At ten minutes to midnight we joined the collective celebration. Over by a canteen tent where everybody had gathered I gave everybody vodka and Swedish snuff. We got into a yelling contest with camps located at different spots all over the mountain. I went back to my tent around two a.m. No Petter, Helena or Eric as far as I could see, but I didn't care not now anyway. I had been screaming for two hours and I had gotten a pinch of snuff in my stomach so before I could fall asleep, I put my head outside the tent and vomited. Then, I took a picture of my self – of course!

#### Friday, January 1<sup>st</sup> 1999, Plaza de Mulas 4 260 m / 13 976 ft (24)

I woke up with the always-present headache, this morning it was easily explained though. The other three were not around when I first woke up; they came back around eight. As it turned out they had stayed at the hotel until late and then ended up spending the night there.

We packed our kit, gave what was left of our food to Magnus and put the rest on the mules and took off. The others walked ahead, no backpacks at all. I had my smaller backpack with some essential stuff like water, suntan lotion and crackers.

I hadn't had any breakfast, no clouds and I was sick of walking. I was screaming for food, but there wasn't anything to do but to walk. It is extraordinary how far one can walk. The only thing on ones mind is the next stop and how many hours it's going to take. Having gotten used to distances explained in time instead of distance was pretty handy to compare with.

I started out ten-thirty and all I had to do was to walk and think, only knowing that it would end some time...

It was almost over and it had taken a lot of energy. I knew that my body for quite some time had started to eat of my body-fat and muscles. For the first hour of walk, I had thoughts so wise and clear. It felt like I was coming up with one Nobel-prize winning idea after the other. I wished that I had had a Dictaphone so I could record everything. To stop and take out pen and paper wasn't any priority; I wanted this mission to be over now. Then of course, all these fabulous thoughts disappeared after two – three hours. I couldn't recall one bit – very sad. Slimy pieces of blood came out of my nose when I had to blow it.

On the way I met Hector again. He was stressing out over not making the bus. I told him that if he were to miss it he could get a ride in the van we had rented. I kept up with him, talking and having fun for about 20 minutes before slowing down my tempo to where it was comfortable again. Half an hour later I caught up with the four of them. Hector, Petter, Helena and Eric who were resting in the shadow of a big overhanging rock. I told them that I had promised Hector a ride and did it in such a way that there was no room for discussion. I wanted to put Helena on place and Hector was to come with us if he wanted!

They took off and I rested by the rock.

When I was to cross the river at Confluencia I couldn't find the bridge and I didn't feel like looking for it so instead I spent thirty minutes getting up on a very large rock and then jump across the 7 meter / 20 feet river.

I got to the parking lot just outside the park entrance at four thirty p.m. and there they were, grumpy over the fact that they had waited almost an hour for me.

Before going all the way to Mendoza I insisted on getting one of those schnitzel-burgers we had had when going to Aconcagua.

Outside the restaurant we meet a guy named Mike who also had finished his climbing, he asked if it would be all right if he got a ride with us to Mendoza. That was of course no problem to us. He was very polite and asked if there was any seat that was occupied. Helena answered that he could grab a seat anywhere. The second after Helena's reply I said that he can sit anywhere but not in the back seat of the van.

Helena heard me and went ballistic, she got hysterical. Asking me if I was to have all seats in the back by my self, or what? Before I even could give her an answer She just said she didn't even want to hear what I was going to say. For the sake of peace I never gave her a reply - it wasn't worth it. I knew there would only be one seat over after we had put our gear back there and I wanted that seat. That was all, oh well...

During the last twenty-four hours the skin in my face had been aching. The reason could have been that the suntan-lotion I used didn't really penetrate the layer of beard in its way, meaning I had almost gotten fried!

Finally back at the hotel they went out to eat and I took a bath. I got shocked when I got up of the bath. I had never seen water so dirty before. When I was shaving I realized that I really had gotten sun burnt badly. The skin along the upper jaws on both sides had gotten stiff and discolored and I was still blowing blood from my nose. I then went to eat and got to sleep around two a.m.

## Saturday, January 2<sup>nd</sup> 1999, Mendoza – 756 m / 2480 ft (25)

I woke up at nine with the conclusion that beds just aren't such bad things at all. I had breakfast at ten. The others left early in order to change departure-date on their

flight-tickets. After I finished eating I walked over to an Internet-cafe. Upon returning to the hotel the others had all already left. We never said goodbye to each other, but it didn't feel as important at that time anyway.

Eric and Petter were good guys and I wouldn't mind to have them on any future expedition.

I took a siesta before I went out to change my departure. Unlucky me, Aerolinas Argentinas Head-office had closed for the day when I got there.

I went to visit Magnus friend Peter who was staying at Campo Base, a youth hostel. I then went to McDonalds, bought 12 liters / 3 gallons of water and went back to my hotel. I tried to call Aerolinas Argentina at the airport several times, after two hours I gave up. I had to wait till Monday.

I called my mom and said that I still was alive.

During the day I had weighed my self, I had lost three - four kilos / six – nine pounds which wasn't too bad, but my reflection in the mirror had a different story. I had lost a lot of muscle-mass on my body, especially on my arms. I guess the body takes energy from muscle-groups that aren't being used.

It had been a chock to see my self in the mirror again after two weeks.

Around ten p.m. Peter, the Swede, knocked on my door. He asked if I wanted to come by the hostel and join the barbecue there. On the way over we picked up some wine and beer.

They served salad, bread, grilled chicken and other various goodies.

I had a nice time except for some French jerks sitting next to me.

When seated at the end of a long table the guy next to me all of a sudden reached for my personal bottle of water I had on the table. I gave the guy a quick glance and told him that it was my bottle. – Ah, said the idiot and replaced the bottle on the table again. Five minutes later, not to long after Peter and I had opened our wine-bottle the fuck-up is on the wine bottle as well. Without asking he grabbed for the bottle and was on his way to pour some wine in to his glass when I told the idiot once again that this bottle was mine as well. – Ah, said the French moron again. No apologies, no nothing – what a retard.

It can be OK if you ask, then you might get some. But when doing like this shithead! It really pissed me off.

I went back to my hotel around two a.m.

### Sunday, January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1999, Mendoza – 756 m / 2480 ft (26)

I slept till ten, then I went to Palmeras, an outside mall together Peter the Swede.

How can they build an outside mall in such a warm country?

Watched a movie, "Meet Joe Black" which I liked, ate and played video games.

Back at the hotel I sent some E-mails.

I watched First Blood on television and went to bed.

### Monday, January 4<sup>th</sup> 1999, Mendoza – 756 m / 2480 ft (27)

I woke up at eight and was very tired.

My face felt and looked better. I was still blowing blood from my nose. Sometimes there were big slimy chunks. I figured it'd go away with time.

I had breakfast and then I went to change my ticket. The ticket was already changed and confirmed till Tuesday - January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2 p.m. It was perfect for me, but who had done this?

I never got to know how this could be, but I'm happy it was like I wanted it to be! I bought a bus ticket to Buenos Aires.

I went to the Internet-cafe and then back to the hotel and hung out there before taking a cab down to the buss terminal.

Before I stepped on the bus I walked over to a place that served sandwiches. All of a sudden after I ordered a sandwich I realized that I was running a bit late. I asked the people to hurry up and put it in a box to go. I tried to take it easy (The hitchhikers guide to the galaxy – take it easy!). Finally five minutes to six p.m. I got an enormous box. I paid and said thanks while wondering why they would use such a huge box for just another sandwich. I hurried as fast as I could with all my kit and the box that was everything for me, since it contained food. I got to the bus at six and handed the backpacks to the luggage-man. – Now money! The luggage-man all of a sudden said. I was very surprised at behavior and gave him twenty centavos, about twenty American cents. He got quiet pretty quickly.

I found my seat on upper deck all the way down, opened the box and found the largest sandwich I have ever seen. I felt a bit bad that I hadn't had time to show my gratitude towards the chefs. The sandwich was sliced in two gigantic parts and I had trouble not pigging around to much with the several layers of bread and in between the beef, the bacon, the tomatoes, the salad, the mayonnaise, the mustard and everything else. I ate one of the halves and saved the second half for breakfast. I fell asleep, then woke up by a girl going around the bus serving food and wine. After eating and drinking my second dinner I fell back to sleep again.

### Tuesday, January 5<sup>th</sup> 1999, Buenos Aires – 0 m / 0 ft (28)

At the bus-terminal in Buenos Aires I found a cabby that would take me to the airport. When we hit the road the cabby asked me if I wanted to go by the expressway. – Why not I told him.

Well this meant I had to pay the road tolls along the way.

At the airport I had to spend a lot of time for the checking in.

I went to the checking-in counter and was referred to the counter on the other side – I went there. I was referred back to the first counter again – I went there. I was referred back to the other counter again – I went there! I was once again referred back to the first counter again! They now came to the conclusion that I was in the right place, but I hadn't paid the airport tax and I had to go through half the building to pay the tax.

When I got there they didn't accept credit cards so I had to go to the other end of the building to make a withdrawal. I went back and paid the airport tax, and then back to the first counter where I was able to cheat with the luggage scale with the help of my foot.

When I was going to go the customs they wouldn't let me in because I didn't have the day's date on my ticket. I had to go to the sales-disk to get a sticker with the day's date. Then finally I could go through the customs. I wasn't on my best mood when I was done with everything. Having to carry the entire luggage through the terminal for what felt like an eternity. What saved my day was a VIP – lounge for American Express cardholders where drinks and snacks were for free. To enjoy my self I tried

almost everything they had in the bar.

When I got to Caracas spent my first night at a hotel that happened to be full of cockroaches.

Four days later I was on one of my boats in the West Indies.

### Last Words:

I have based this story on my diary-notes. All my regards to Eric Schaechter, Ole - Petter Bjertnes and Helena Artmann (the expedition-members) and to all the people in this story.

Not to forget all my sponsors that has helped me in one way or the other:

Nordic Life, Ajungilak, Ketonic, Agfa – Geavert, Optimus, Philips, Telenordia, Triconor, Reprorit, Wasa Vaccination, Red Cross, Thermos, Wasa Bröd, Trangia, Varta, Europeiska Försäkringar, Hilleberg, Tierra, Åre Agentur, High Sport.

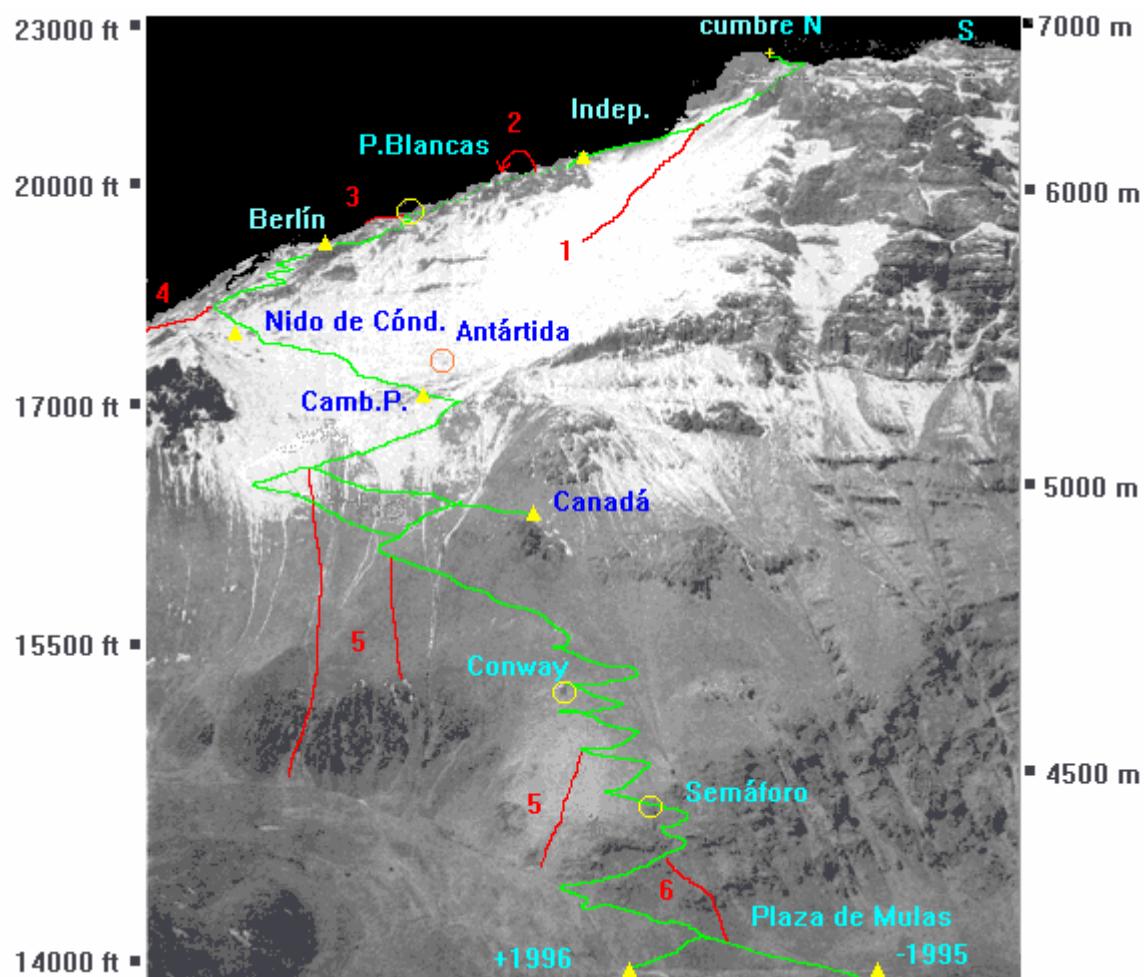
## Travel Expenses

Flight Stockholm – Caracas	4.500 SEK / 562 USD
Excess weight and change of departure date	1.800 SEK / 225 USD
Flight Caracas – Buenos Aires – Caracas	8.000 SEK / 1.000 USD
Wrapping of luggage	120 SEK / 15 USD
Taxi to and from Guillermo, Argentina	360 SEK / 45 USD
Bus Buenos Aires – Mendoza	440 SEK / 55 USD
Park-entrance fee	960 SEK / 120 USD
Liquid for the camping stove	20 SEK / 2 USD
Food	435 SEK / 54 USD
Taxi	35 SEK / 4 USD
Bus to Punte del Inca	80 SEK / 10 USD
Mules up and down	940 SEK / 117 USD
Rent of crampons	240 SEK / 30 USD
Mini-van Punte del Inca - Mendoza	280 SEK / 35 USD
Hotel Mendoza	790 SEK / 99 USD
Bus Mendoza – Buenos Aires	440 SEK / 55 USD
Taxi to the airport	280 SEK / 35 USD
Sum:	19.720 SEK / 2.465 USD

Simplified map over the way from Puente del Inca to Plaza de Mulas  
(Base Camp)



Photographical map, over the alternative ways from Plaza de Mulas (Base Camp) to Cumbre Norte (the top of Aconcagua)



## Diverse data

Site / Lugar	Altitude meters - feet	Latitude ° S	Longitude ° W	Time hr:min
☺ Puente del Inca	2.720 - 8,900	32° 49.47'	69° 54.69'	-
↖ Ranger / Guardaparques	2.850 - 9,350	32° 48.63'	69° 58.49'	-
↖ Horcones lagoon / laguna		32° 48.37'	69° 56.56'	0:05
☺ bridge / puente 1		32° 47.34'	69° 58.87'	0:30
♦ water / agua		32° 45.67'	69° 57.88'	2:30
→ to / a Plaza Francia		32° 45.36'	69° 58.37'	0:30
☺ bridge / puente 2		32° 45.33'	69° 58.48'	0:05
↖ Confluencia	3.300 - 10,850	32° 45.45'	69° 58.45'	0:10
↖ Confluencia, upper / superior		32° 44.59'	69° 59.16'	0:40
♦ water (yellow stones) / agua (piedras amarillas)		32° 42.20'	70° 03.01'	3:15
↖ refugio Ibáñez		32° 41.90'	70° 03.22'	0:30
↖ Plaza de Mulas, lower / inferior	4.000 - 13,100	32° 39.65'	70° 03.52'	2:00
↖ Plaza de Mulas, older / viejo	4.260 - 14,000	32° 38.91'	70° 03.23'	0:45
☺ to / a hotel bridge / puente	4.220 - 13,800	32° 39.11'	70° 03.76	0:15
↖ Plaza Mulas hotel	4.260 - 14,000	32° 39.29'	70° 03.83'	0:15
↖ Plaza Mulas camp / campamento	4.265 - 14,000	32° 38.90'	70° 03.40'	0:20
↖ El Semáforo	4.460 - 14,650	32° 38.88'	70° 03.14'	0:50
☒ Piedras Conway	4.630 - 15,200	32° 38.78'	70° 02.98'	0:40
☒ Plaza California	4.740 - 15,550	32° 38.80'	70° 02.78'	0:30
♦ snow patch / nevero	4.820 - 15,800	32° 38.60'	70° 02.67'	0:15
↖ Plaza Canadá	4.910 - 16,100	32° 38.73'	70° 02.56'	0:45
☒ stones at / piedras de 5000	5.045 - 16,550	32° 38.54'	70° 02.40'	0:55
↖ Cambio de Pendiente	5.200 - 17,050	32° 38.43'	70° 0220'	0:45
↖ Nido de Cóndores	5.380 - 17,650	32° 38.15'	70° 01.77'	1:00
☒ yellow balcony / balcón amarillo	5.550 - 18,200	32° 38.28'	70° 01.33'	1:30
↖ refugio Berlín	5.780 - 19,000	32° 38.36'	70° 01.27'	0:30
↖ Piedras Blancas	6.030 - 19,800	32° 38.42'	70° 01.12'	0:45
↖ Piedras Negras	6.200 - 20,350	32° 38.47'	70° 00.97'	1:00
↖ refugio Independencia	6.400 - 21,000	32° 38.69'	70° 00.96'	2:00
↖ Summit / Cumbre	<b>6.962 - 22,841</b>	32° 39.21'	70° 00.75'	4:00 - 5:00