



## AAC Publications

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### **Aconcagua, Polish Glacier, First Known American Ascent**

Argentina, Andes

**In January 1978, an expedition led by Jack Heffernan from New York climbed the Polish Glacier route on the northeast face of Aconcagua (6,960m), completing the first known ascent of this route by an American team.** Five members reached the summit: brothers Bruce and Robert Blatherwick, Carl Dixon, Wayne Failing, and Larry Gibbs. Heffernan and Morrie Trautman, who each reached around 18,000 feet, suffered from altitude sickness and had to descend. The remaining team members were Steve Hardy and Stuart Snider, M.D.

Following the expedition, the president of the Mendoza Mountaineering Association confirmed to Heffernan that this team was the first from the United States to summit via the Polish Route, now commonly called the Polish Glacier. The *Diario Los Andes* newspaper interviewed team members and published an article about the climb. At the U.S. embassy in Santiago, Chile, Ambassador George Landau hosted an “all American breakfast” for the team, complete with chocolate chip cookies baked by the ambassador’s wife.

The Polish Glacier route was first climbed in 1934, the summit party consisting of S. Daszynski. K. Markiewicz, S. Osiecki, and W. Ostrowski. The first American ascent of Aconcagua by any route was likely by Lt. William Hackett, who climbed the peak in February 1949 by its normal route from Plaza de Mulas.

— **Dougald MacDonald, AAJ, with information from Jack Heffernan**

## Images



1978 expedition members on the summit of Aconcagua after climbing the Polish Glacier: (left to right) Wayne Failing, Carl Dixon, Larry Gibbs, Bruce Blatherwick, and Robert Blatherwick.



1978 expedition leader Jack Heffernan at advanced base camp below Aconcagua.

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