



180° SOUTH

CONQUERORS OF THE USELESS



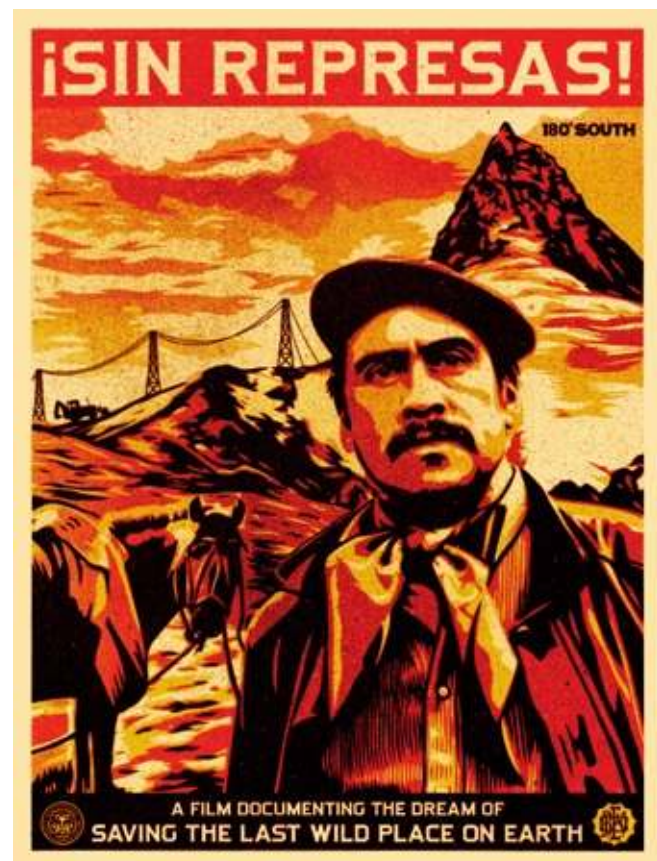
180° South

Conquerors of the Useless

patagonia
BOOKS



The *Cahuelmo* anchored in an estuary. Below Cerro Corcovado, Patagonia, Chile. Photo: Scott Soens



One of the biggest social and environmental issues facing Chile is the damming of rivers. Local residents have started a campaign against the dams called ¡Sin Represas! (Without Dams). Money from Patagonia's sale of a poster and T-shirt (art shown here) will be donated to charitable organizations connected to ¡Sin Represas! Art: Shepard Fairey

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FUN HOGS

YVON CHOUINARD



Yvon Chouinard aboard the *Cahuelmo*. Chaitén, Chile. Photo: Jeff Johnson

You never know how an adventure will influence the rest of your life. In 1968, when Doug Tompkins proposed that we drive from California to Patagonia – in those days a name as remote and alluring as Timbuktu – neither of us could know it would be the most important trip either of us would ever take. The goal was to put up a new route on an obscure tusk of granite called Cerro Fitz Roy and have some fun along the way. The experience led to an unlikely fate for a couple of dirtbags: we became philanthropists.

Doug owned a small outdoor store in San Francisco, where he had a few sleeping bags and tents sewed in the back room; I had a blacksmith shop in Ventura where we forged pitons and machined carabiners for a market that needed no research – we and our friends were the customers.

It took Doug and me only a couple of weeks to turn our work over to others, talk Dick Dorworth and Lito Tejada-Flores into driving down with us (English climber Chris Jones would hook up with us later), and secure a van – a high-mileage 1965 Ford Econoline. I built a sleeping platform in the back and then we shoehorned in four pairs of skis, eight climbing ropes, racks of carabiners and pitons, camping gear, cold-weather clothing, warm-weather clothing, wetsuits, and fishing rods. We tied two surfboards on the roof. We took along the banner Doug's wife, Susie, made for us to fly from Fitz Roy's summit; its big block letters read "VIVA LOS FUN HOGS."

We all had complementary talents. Because I had taken auto mechanics in high school, I was appointed team mechanic. Doug and I were the most experienced climbers; Doug and Dick were expert skiers. I was a surfer, and Lito was a climber and photographer to whom we assigned the task of documenting the trip with a wind-up 16mm Bolex we bought secondhand. Lito had never before made a movie or even shot a movie camera. We were living up to Doug's credo, borrowed from Napoleon: "Commit first, then figure it out."

Only a week after leaving Ventura, we were surfing the breaks outside Mazatlán. South of Mexico

City the pavement gave way to a dirt road that, except for a few concrete stretches through capital cities and a gap in Panama, would continue to Patagonia. Once we crossed into Guatemala, however, we confronted a challenge greater than a dirt highway. We were sleeping on the ground around the van when an army patrol woke us, a 16-year-old kid pointing his machine gun from my head to Dick's. We managed to convince them we weren't CIA agents, just tourists on a surf trip, then made a beeline for the border of Costa Rica, which had the only sane government in the region – and great surf breaks.

We had to scuttle our plan to stay there for a while when the volcano above our break erupted. So much ash fell between sets that the decks of our surfboards turned black – and it was almost impossible to breathe.



Tom Frost and Yvon Chouinard at the forge in the early years. Ventura, California. Photo: Patagonia Archives

We drove south to Panama to ride breaks that probably had never been surfed before, and then, to go around the roadless Darién Gap, drove our van onboard a Spanish freighter bound for Cartagena, Colombia. Dick, famous for his night driving skills – and aided by cassette tapes of Joplin, Dylan, and Hendrix, and a few other means – power-drove all the way to Ecuador, where I knew of a surf spot Mike Doyle had discovered.

All this time Lito filmed our adventure with the wind-up Bolex. Doug had talked me into sharing the costs of the camera and film with him. He was convinced that once home, we – the “producers” – could sell the film to make enough to pay for the trip and then some. (When we got back, we spent more money editing the footage into a one-hour film, *Mountain of Storms*, which made it into a few specialty film festivals but was never distributed.)

We surfed in Ecuador, then sold our boards in Peru. In Chile we pulled out the skis and skinned up and skied down Lliama, a big volcano outside Temuco, and farther south, Osorno, sometimes called the Fuji of South America.

Just south of Puerto Montt the highway came to an end, blocked by deep fjords and the great tidewater glaciers descending from the continental icecaps. We loaded the van on small ferries and crossed sapphire-blue lakes framed by beech forests and snow-capped volcanoes, off-loaded the van, and drove the short distance to the next lake crossing. In Argentina, on the leeward side of the Andes, the landscape changed suddenly from temperate rain forest to open steppes, and the Econoline, seasonally

by over 12,000 miles of hard driving, barreled down the celebrated Route 40, the dirt road that, on the Argentinean side of the Andes, connects northern to southern Patagonia.

Miles later we left Route 40 and followed a road more like a horse track around Lago Viedma, one of a series of large, glacially carved lakes in the southern Andes. This was the worst road any of us had encountered, and we didn't see another vehicle for 180 miles. Then the trail petered out entirely. In those years only a footbridge crossed the Rio de las Vueltas, so we parked the Econoline and talked some army soldiers into helping us carry our gear to base camp. The only other humans in the region were the gaucho Rojo, and the widow Sepulveda and her sons, who ran a sheep station three days horse ride from Lago del Desierto.

At that point we had been on the road for nearly four months; it would take us another two months to climb Fitz Roy. The peak had been summited only twice, first by the iconoclastic Frenchman Lionel Terray, who wrote that Fitz Roy was one of two climbs he had no desire to repeat. Terray built his reputation on ascents of peaks that were obscure to laymen but considered classics by climbers for their beauty or the difficulty of their routes. He understood that how you reached the summit was more important than the feat itself. His approach appealed to those of us who had cut our teeth on first ascents of Yosemite's high walls, where you got to the top only to realize there wasn't anything there. Terray said it all when he titled his autobiography *Conquistadors of the Useless*.



Chouinard Equipment employees in 1966. Ventura, California. Photo: Tom Frost



Tools of the trade: hand-forged climbing gear made by Chouinard Equipment in the 1960s. Photo: Patagonia Archives

Once at the base of Fitz Roy, between brief breaks in the scudding clouds we could trace a line of ascent (now called the Ruta de los Californianos) that would be hard but doable. Then the weather changed.

Because the Andes rise so suddenly out of the Southern Ocean, the storms that blow in the latitudes of the Howling Fifties collide with the peaks like a train hitting a huge wall. The winds of Patagonia are so strong you feel you can bite into them.

Our tents were no match for such winds, so we had to dig snow caves, including one at the base of the final rock ridge leading to the summit that became our high camp. In the 60 days it took us to reach the summit, we had only five days of weather clear enough to climb. The rest of the time we waited.

I spent a total of 31 days confined to a snow cave. I had skewered my knee with my ice axe while cutting ice for the stove. So while the others left periodically to go down and rustle a sheep to augment our meager food reserves, I stayed on my back staring at a gloomy ceiling of ice melting inches above my face. Every time we started the stove to cook, the walls dripped onto our down sleeping bags which became useless wet lumps. We were perpetually cold and hungry. I turned 30 years old inside that cave; it was a low point in my life. But because it honed me to handle adversity, it was a high point too.

When the weather finally broke, we knew we had to move fast. Doug and I led the pitches, and at the top of each we fixed a rope that Lito would then ascend to film us as we started the next pitch. Dick and Chris followed carrying our gear. We were very efficient, and before sunset we reached the top and posed while Lito filmed us holding Susie's banner.

The feeling of jubilation on the summit of any tough climb is tempered by the awareness that you still have to get down. We couldn't get back to the ice cave before dark, and after 21 hours straight of climbing and rappelling we were forced to bivouac. The wind returned and it was a miserable night, but as another climbing friend Doug Scott once said about a bivouac high on Everest, the quality of the survival was good.

Doug has said that spending so much of our formative years in close proximity to the beauty of nature allowed an appreciation for it to enter our bones. Appreciate something for long enough and you learn to love it. And anytime you love something, you also want to care for it and safeguard it.

In the mid '80s I returned to the base of Fitz Roy with my friends Rick Ridgeway and Tom Brokaw. At the roadhead we stepped out of our van to begin the trek: In the grassy fields, where only 15 years earlier Rojo's sheep grazed, lay a maze of survey markers, each with a pennant of orange tape marking the location of a new street, a new restaurant, a new hotel. A few months later the town of El Chaltén was under construction.

By then my business had grown. So had Doug's. While he was away on our long road trip, Susan started a small line of boutique women's dresses called Plain Jane that she and Doug later developed into a billion-dollar company called Esprit.

My wife, Malinda, and I also went into the rag trade, after importing some rugby shirts from Scotland that took off and threatened to make enough profit to support the climbing business. The clothes, like the gear, had to be strong, long lasting, and perform perfectly for the use intended. We introduced clean lines, bold colors, and light, technical layering to outdoor clothing – and named our new company Patagonia.



Doug Tompkins on the first ascent of Ruta de los Californianos in 1968. Cerro Fitz Roy, Chile. Photo: Chris Jones



Doug Tompkins during an expedition to the Trango Towers in the mid 1980s. Baltistan, Pakistan. Photo: Doug Tompkins Collection

Doug and I wanted to give back to what we cared about most. By the mid-1980s Patagonia, the company, had started to give 1 percent of its sales to grassroots organizations to help save a patch of land here or a stretch of river there. Around the same time, recognizing the environmental damage business does, Esprit introduced its pioneer “eco-collection” of women’s wear made with natural fibers and dyes and organically grown cotton.

In 1990, I decided to take the senior management of my company off-site for an examination of our goals and responsibilities. We loaded our backpacks, and Patagonia-the-company journeyed to Patagonia-the-place. The experience was seminal. Coming out of that trip, and during the sessions that followed our return, we wrote the company mission statement still used to guide our decisions: “Build the best product, cause no unnecessary harm, and use business to inspire and implement solutions to the environmental crisis.”

A bit later on, we did an analysis of the environmental impacts of our four main clothing fibers. On learning that conventional cotton accounted for 25 percent of all the insecticides used in world agriculture, we decided to go organic – even though there wasn’t enough organic cotton available to supply our needs. In the early 2000s we introduced the first closed-loop recycling program in the clothing industry, and most recently we created a Web site where our customers can examine the environmental consequences of the clothing they buy from us, both the good and the bad.

During the past 20 years there have been a few times when, frustrated with the business, I’ve thought about selling it, putting the money into a foundation, and using it to effect environmental change and protection. Each time, though, I’ve decided that the better strategy was to keep the company and use it as a model for responsible business.

That wasn’t true for Doug, however. In the late ’80s, after he and Susie divorced, he sold his half of Esprit and put the money into his own foundation. At first he followed the same strategy we had in Patagonia, making grants to small, front-line environmental groups. But then he hatched a plan for an entirely different model. Land in Patagonia was cheap, but also threatened by construction – as we had seen with El Chaltén at the base of Fitz Roy – and by oil and gas development and overgrazing on the estancias. What if he used his foundation’s resources to buy these threatened lands and protect them?

Doug flew his small Cessna to southern Chile and Argentina to check out estancias that might be for sale. He bought several parcels, including a farm on the edge of a fjord that would become home to him and his second wife, former Patagonia CEO Kristine McDivitt. He then began acquiring contiguous properties that he eventually would combine into Pumalín – at nearly 800,000 acres, the largest privately held park in the world.

Kris joined Doug in his work on conservation projects across Patagonia, including a new effort of her own called Conservación Patagónica. She wanted to attract the support of philanthropists to help her acquire large properties that would then be returned to the people of Chile or Argentina. Her first project was on the Atlantic coast just north of the Straits of Magellan. Today Monte León is Argentina's first and only maritime national park, protecting 26 miles of wild coastline, home to a vital seal rookery as well as a penguin colony of about half a million birds. Her current project is to create Patagonia National Park, centered around the magnificent Valle Chacabuco that cuts transversally through the Andes, providing habitat for overlap species from both the wet windward side as well as the dry leeward biomes.

This project is in a sense all in the family. Patagonia, the company, has contributed money as well as subsidized employees to do volunteer work removing fences and eradicating non-native plants.

Our company has become an attractive place to work for anyone who cares about the fate of the planet, and this in turn has made it easy to recruit good employees. It's also an appealing company to the outdoor athletes who test and promote our products. We attract some of the top climbers, surfers and skiers in the world, not so much the most competitive, but those who relate to the soul of the sport – climbers who are more into the quality of the route than gaining the summit, and surfers more interested in an undiscovered wave on a remote coastline than another contest prize.

That is certainly the case with one of our key surf ambassadors, Chris Malloy. Before he decided to look me up, and then come to work for us, Chris began his own pilgrimage trying to understand his growing disillusionment with the life of a professional competitive surfer. He was living in Hawaii wrestling with those questions, when a close friend and North Shore lifeguard named Jeff Johnson showed him a copy of an obscure film about a bunch of friends back in the 1960s who bought a funkiest Ford van and drove it all the way from California to a place called Patagonia.

Chris and his friends were kind enough to include Doug and me in their revisit of our adventure – and to take advantage of some typically nonstop Patagonia rain to ply us with questions on how we can best to value what we do and how we set down our road. The photos and stories in this book give you the perspectives of two generations of climbers and surfers who have come into contact with the wild and had their lives changed forever. It is the nature of nature that you can't come to know it from a book but you can get a glimpse here. Even that much will make you want to act – and live for it.



Doug Tompkins and Billy Kidd taking time out from ski races in the early 1960s. Valparaiso, Chile. Photo: Doug Tompkins Collection



Doug Tompkins climbing in typical Scottish conditions in the early 1970s in the Cairngorms, Scotland. Photo: Yvon Chouinard



Tom Frost, Doug Tompkins, Dick Dorworth, Yvon Chouinard, and Lito Tejada-Flores in front of Chouinard Equipment prior to the 1968 road trip south to climb Cerro Fitz Roy. Ventura, California. Photo: Patagonia Archives



In the late 1990s photographer and Patagonia employee Amy Kumler snuck the *Mountain of Storms* VHS tape from the Patagonia vault and gave it to Jeff Johnson to view. After watching the film with Chris Malloy and his brothers, the four of them dreamt of doing a similar trip of their own one day. Eventually the “forgotten film” would become the inspiration for Chris Malloy’s film *18 South*. This is the original film canister for *Mountain of Storms*. The images that follow are frame grabs from that original film. Photo: Jeff Johnson



Somewhere on the Pan-American Highway. These were among the first 8-foot surfboards made – the shortboards of their time.
Photo: Lito Tejada-Flores



After the asphalt turns to dirt: south of Mexico City along the Pan-American Highway. Mexico. Photos: Lito Tejada-Flores



Somewhere in Panama, without a Michelin Guide. Panama. Photo: Lito Tejada-Flores



Checking out the surf at Chicama, in northwest Peru. At 2.5 km it is one of the longest rideable breaks in the world. Chicama, Peru. Photo: Lito Tejada-Flores



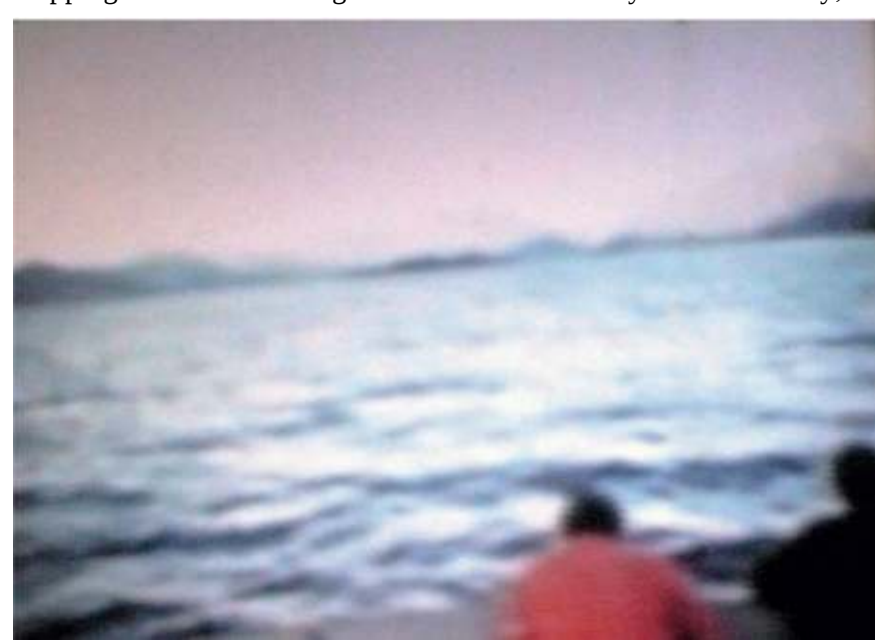
Yvon Chouinard surfing the Chicama break. Chicama, Peru. Photo: Lito Tejada-Flores



Doug Tompkins at Chicama. Chicama, Peru. Photo: Lito Tejada-Flores



Stepping out of the van to get a first look at Fitz Roy. Cerro Fitz Roy, Patagonia. Photo: Lito Tejada-Flores



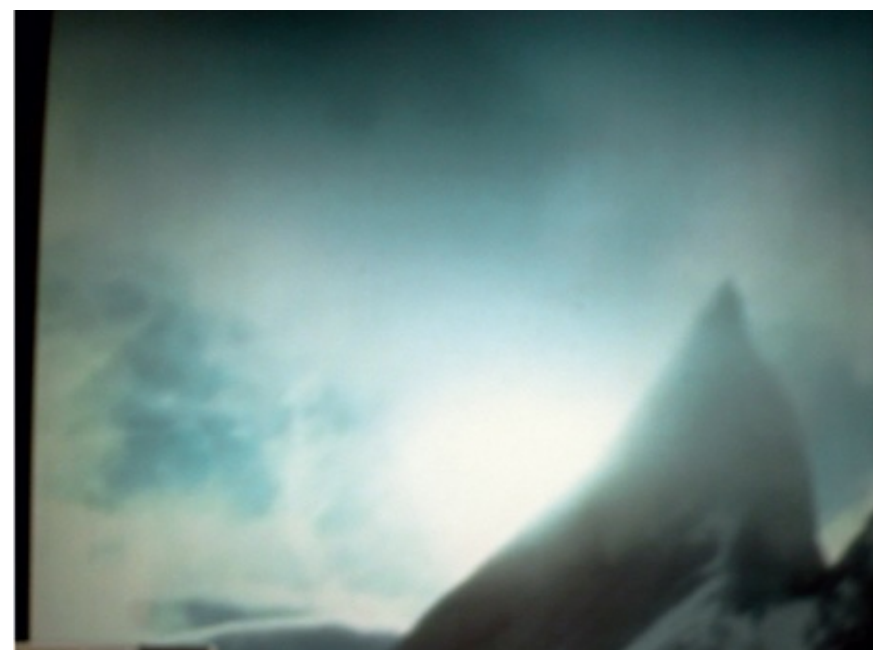
Riding the ferry for the lakes crossing from Puerto Montt, Chile, to Bariloche, Argentina. Argentine-Chilean border. Photo: Lito Tejada-Flores



The fun hogs climbed the active volcano Mount Laima, then skied their way down. Chile. Photo: Lito Tejada-Flores



The fun hogs ascend Mount Osorno, Chile, shouldering skis for the trip down. Chile. Photo: Lito Tejada-Flores



On Fitz Roy. Patagonia. Photo: Lito Tejada-Flores



Yvon Chouinard on Cerro Fitz Roy, wearing the same Annapurna glasses (with leather side shields) he'd bring 40 years later Corcovado and Cerro Kristine. Cerro Fitz Roy, Patagonia. Photo: Lito Tejada-Flores



Hauling loads on the way to the base of Fitz Roy. Patagonia. Photo: Lito Tejada-Flores



Near the base of Fitz Roy. Patagonia. Photo: Lito Tejada-Flores



Yvon Chouinard on the last difficult pitch, Fitz Roy. Patagonia. Photos: Lito Tejada-Flores





Near Fitz Roy's base. Patagonia. Photo: Lito Tejada-Flores



Chris Jones during the group's 31-day stay in the ice cave. Patagonia. Photo: Lito Tejada-Flores



Yvon Chouinard trying to keep a taut rope in high winds, outside the ice cave on Fitz Roy. Patagonia. Photo: Lito Tejada-Flores



Yvon Chouinard battling the wind, near the summit of Fitz Roy. Patagonia. Photo: Lito Tejada-Flores



Viva los Fun Hogs. At the summit of Fitz Roy. Patagonia. Photo: Lito Tejada-Flores

THE WAY TO 180° SOUTH

CHRIS MALLOY



Chris Malloy competing in the Eddie Aikau big-wave invitational contest in December of 2004. Waimea Bay, Oahu. Photo: Haru Foto

When I saw the light, I realized the impact must have knocked me out. I was still 12 feet underwater and I had to put the pieces together fast. I was at Pipeline. I'd fallen on the vertical drop and got sucked back over the falls – twice. On the second revolution I'd bounced hard off the bottom.

I pulled toward the surface, following a shaft of light that led through a clearing in the fizzing foam, praying I'd have time for at least one full breath before the next wave hit. I broke the surface and purged a mix of carbon dioxide, salt water, and vomit all in one massive exhale. Then I drew three deep breaths. Usually oxygen makes the spots go away, but not this time. The spots were closing in. My wave had been the first of the set and the horizon was black with at least four more bombs. I had 10 seconds before the first would detonate on the first reef, exactly where I was treading water.

Over the previous 10 years I had devoted my life to surfing Pipeline and had been in this situation before and survived. I knew there was no need to panic. Then I realized that I hadn't been in this exact situation; there was blood swirling in the foam around me and something big banging into my right leg. That something big turned out to be my left leg.

I had only seconds before the next wave broke. I had to make a choice: detach the leash from my dangling leg or keep it on. If I kept it on, as the wave broke the board would rip my left knee further out of its socket. If I let it go, I wouldn't have a board to float on, and I was still losing blood and already dizzy. And I had to make it through at least four quadruple overhead waves still stacked out in the sea.

I kept the leash on, hoping to hold it tight enough to reduce the pull on my leg. The next wave hit, and the leash ripped from my hand as I cartwheeled in the whitewater. The leash stretched and my knee dislocated again; I had 10 seconds to the next wave. I had been hurt plenty of times before, but those injuries came out of nowhere and by the time I could realize what hit me, the danger had passed. This was different. This time I knew what was coming, and every wave was worse than the one before.

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