



High Ambition

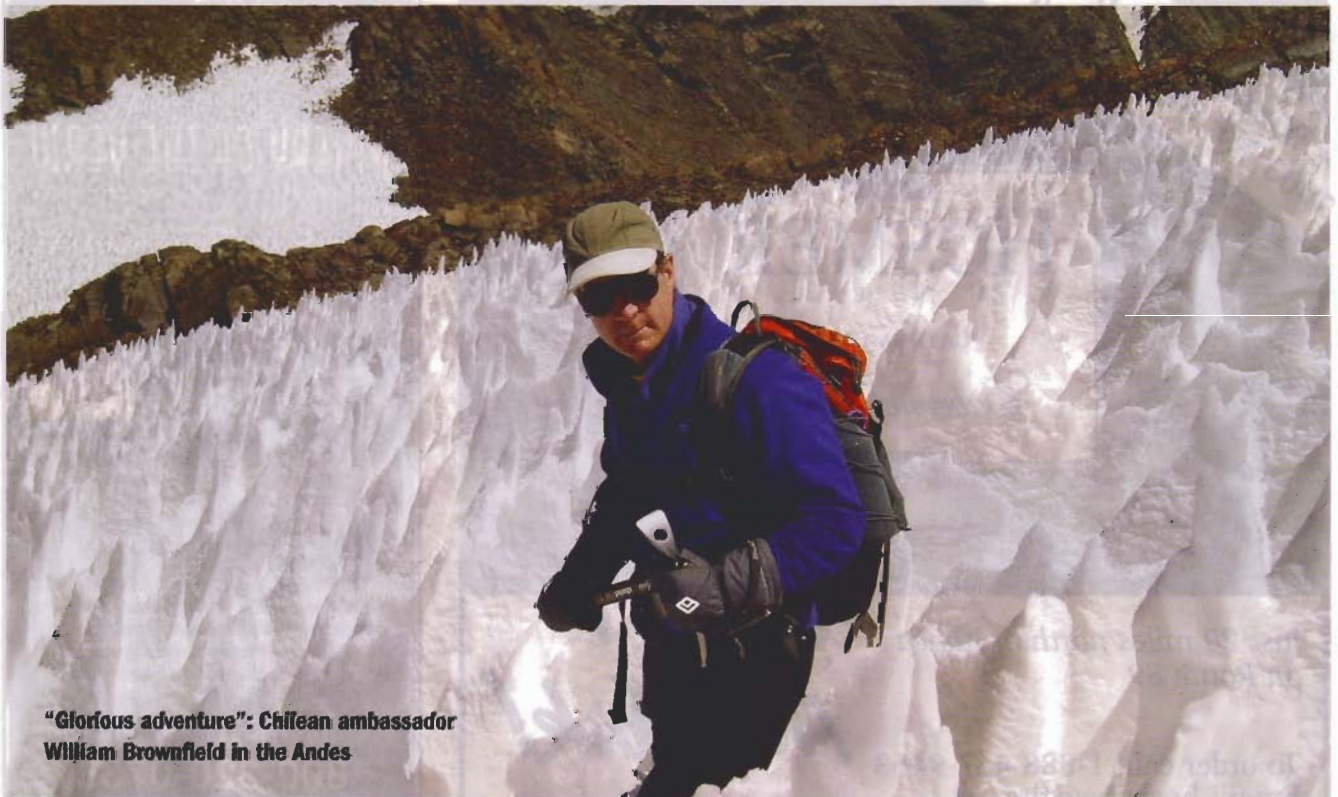
CHILEAN AMBASSADOR HEADS FOR THE HILLS

WILLIAM BROWNFIELD TOOK up mountain climbing two years ago, at the age of fifty-two. Since then, he's made a speedy ascent to the top of a sport that usually demands years of training, experience, and apprenticeship. Brownfield '74 has scaled many of the most significant peaks in the Andes, including Cerro Marmolejo, the southernmost 6,000-meter peak in the world. "Here, you have accessibility to the mountains that you just don't have anywhere else," says the Lub-

bock, Texas, native, who's also journeyed to such premier mountaineering destinations as Chamonix, a European climbing mecca in the shadow of Mont Blanc amidst the French Alps.

When he's not on top of a mountain, Brownfield serves as the U.S. ambassador to Chile, a post he has held since March 2002. The twenty-five-year veteran of the Foreign Service refers to his career as a "glorious adventure"—one that has taken him throughout Latin America and the

Caribbean. Along the way he has earned four Superior Honor Awards, the highest recognition bestowed within the State Department below the level of Secretary of State. In El Salvador, he investigated and brought to justice those responsible for two sensitive murder cases of U.S. citizens; in Nicaragua and El Salvador, he negotiated conclusions to wars; in Haiti, he created an international police force to maintain peace; and in Colombia, he clamped down on the "unholy marriage between



"Glorious adventure": Chilean ambassador William Brownfield in the Andes

COURTESY OF JOHN VANCE

armed forces and the narcotics production and trafficking industries." Most recently, he helped broker a contentious free-trade agreement with Chile, the first such bilateral deal between the U.S. and a South American country.

But Brownfield, who majored in history on the Hill and later studied at the University of Texas School of Law and the National War College, says his proudest moments came in 1995 and 1996, while he was counselor for the United States' Geneva Mission for Humanitarian Affairs. The Bosnian crisis was at a climax. Serbs controlled all routes in and out of Sarajevo, cutting off the lifeline of international aid to the starving Bosnians. "They left only one little route, in essence a goat track, open," he says. "They did not expect us to be able to move eighteen-wheeler trucks with twenty or thirty tons of supplies over mountain passes in the middle of winter with feet of snow on the ground." But the trucks got through, thanks in large part to Brownfield's efforts to coordinate U.N. and international aid organizations, and a small group of German and Austrian truck drivers.

It was while stationed in Geneva, Switzerland, that Brownfield caught the climbing bug, though it wasn't until his Santiago stint that it developed into a passion that would take him to the top of some of Chile's highest mountains. "Somewhat to my surprise, I found not only that I enjoyed it, but that I was able to do it fairly well," he says. "In many ways, mountaineering is the ultimate challenge. How do you get from point A to point B with minimal risk to yourself and the other members of your team with the equipment that you have available?"

His first climbs took place in the mountains immediately surrounding Santiago, where more than ten peaks above 10,000 feet are visible from his office window, and the trailhead for serious climbs is within twenty minutes of his front door. He soon graduated to taller peaks and more remote ranges, topping 5,050-meter Leonera four times, as well as 5,500-meter El Plomo, where climbers pass a fifteenth-century Inca altar en route to the summit.

Not every peak has yielded to Brown-

field's efforts, including 4,900-meter Cerro Morado, which the ambassador has attempted three times. "Morado is a fairly tricky mountain in a technical sense," he says. "I've managed to bump into crevasses at all the wrong places." Determining whether to turn around on such climbs requires a certain amount of discretion, and the ambassador-turned-alpinist says he takes a prudent approach to managing the risks. "I don't ask for disaster," he says. "I want it to be a surprise when it happens."

Brownfield's tallest mountain to date is 6,108-meter Cerro Marmolejo, a dormant stratovolcano on the Chile-Argentina border. Local climbers affectionately refer to it as *Muy Muy Lejo*, or "very, very far away." The peak lies forty miles southeast of Santiago deep in the heart of the Central Andes at the head of the Cajon del Maipo valley. The deep, glacially sculpted canyon extends east to Argentina's border, where snowy white peaks cap imposing walls of rock, ice, and snow. "The approach is about a 6,000-mile slog," jokes Brownfield. "That includes three days on glacial ice hauling 16,000 pounds of gear, freezing and wondering

the entire time why it is so important to climb Marmolejo."

Such whimsical complaints are par for the course for Brownfield, who says he hates crevasses and the cold, staying true to an old climbing maxim that mountaineering is truly the art of suffering. "I don't climb just to climb ice or rock. I want it to be en route to somewhere," says the diplomat. "I have no objection to climbing so long as it is in the process of getting to a summit."

Brownfield's term in Chile will likely end with a change in the U.S. administration; in the meantime, he has two goals: position Chile and the U.S. to derive mutual benefit from their relationship, and summit a few more mountains before he leaves the region. "Before I close out my Latin American career, I want to say I've climbed Aconcagua and Ojos de Salado," he says. "I'm too old to take on the Himalayas. The Rockies, Andes, and Alps had better satisfy me with enough adventure for the next ten to fifteen years before the old pistons give out and I park myself in front of the television and watch other people do it."

— Peter Bronski '01

Right on Schedule

STUDENT WEBSITE EASES COURSE SELECTION PROCESS

It's time to plan next semester's schedule, and the aggravation begins: Chaucer and Intermediate Macroeconomics meet at the same time and both fulfill requirements, but which is more interesting? Marketing sounds cool, but when does it meet? Cornell provides course descriptions and times, but on two separate Web pages. Dan Zarzar '04 found the system agonizing, so this year he created the CU Scheduler, which ends Web-hopping by putting all of the information in one place. "You come to the university to take classes," says the engineering major. "That's the most important thing you can do."

Word of the site, which went online in March, spread like wildfire. "Two thousand people ended up using it," says Zarzar, who programmed the site (www.dzarzar.net/cornell) in a single weekend. In the future, he anticipates including median grades and ratings of professors. Although its creator won't be on campus in the fall, the Scheduler will continue with help from returning students. "I'll work with them to see it develop and grow—there's so much more that we can do with it."



— Sarah Brubaker '06