

The Eureka Pass area on Axel Heiberg Island. *Greg Horne*

Axel Heiberg 2005 Peak Ascent List

DATE	PEAK	ELEVATION	ROUTE	UTM GRID REF ¹
Apr 29	"Cone Mountain"	898m	NE slopes	E 0508099 N 8942832
May 9	Outlook Peak	1963 to 2012m ²	ENE ridge	E 0531789 N 8852723
May 13	"Reconnaissance Ridge"			
	(north peak)	1244m	N slopes	E 0443492 N 8836914
	(central peak)	1233m	N slopes	E 0443050 N 8836604
May 15	"Piper Mountain"	1795m	NE ridge	E 0443259 N 8828842
May 16	"Ikulliaq (Calm) Mtn."	1760m	W slopes	E 0446681 N 8826906
May 20	"Junction Mountain"	1342m	S slopes	E 0458846 N 8798268
May 21	"Diversion Peak"	1580m	E slopes	E 0459687 N 8793311
May 26	"Grand Vista Point"	1470m	W ridge	E 0553112 N 8745646
May 30	"Bumble Bee Hill"	305m	NE ridge	E 0548781 N 8695595

1 - Summits of April 29, May 9, 26, and 30 are in UTM grid zone designation 15 X, NAD 27.

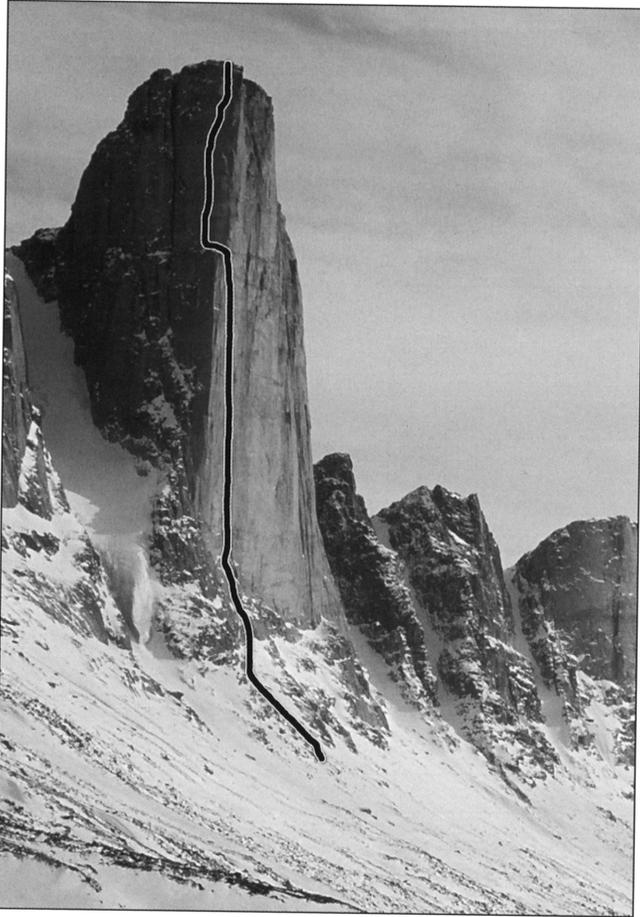
Summits of May 13 to May 21 are in UTM grid zone designation 16 X, NAD 27.

2 - Elevation differences from Garmin 12 and Etrex models.

All elevations and grid references are by a Garmin 12 GPS unit using the position averaging function.

Baffin Island, Wilson Wall, Grin and Barret, and tragedy. On April 24 Drew Wilson (24), Kyle Dempster (22), Grover Shipman (32), Ross Cowan (41), and I (25) left Ottawa for the Stewart Valley. I knew of only four routes there, two of which were professionally organized expeditions to Great Sail Peak. We left Clyde River in subzero temperatures and sledged across Sam Ford Fjord to Stewart Valley, establishing camp beneath Great Sail Peak. We knew of no other climbers in northeastern Baffin.

We chose a 2,200' unnamed, unclimbed, overhanging spire 2½ miles southwest of Great Sail Peak, on the same side of the valley, and moved camp to the spire. Dempster and Wilson began fixing up snow and rock slabs, while Cowan, Shipman, and I brought loads up the 2,000' approach. Wilson and Dempster continued fixing over loose rock above a hanging snowfield, and Shipman and I narrowly avoided being hit. Wilson completed the free crux, a 5.11 traverse on loose flakes.



Wilson Wall, showing Grin and Barret. *Pete Dronkers*

Shipman would remain in base camp, while the rest of us climbed in teams of two in shifts around the clock. While sorting food at base camp, though, Cowan decided not to participate, so we climbed as three.

After the final hauls, we drilled our camp below a dihedral. We had pulled up 1,100' of rope, and were suspended 400' up overhanging rock. Lacking spotting scopes, we had to route-find as we progressed. We climbed 60m and 70m pitches, generally continuous and thin, in extreme cold, over many days. Dempster and Wilson—cousins and long-time partners—did most of the leading, as Cowan had been my intended partner. Wilson accomplished the aid crux, an A4- hook traverse, and Dempster led an 80m pitch by tying ropes together.

With 1,000' of rope fixed above, it appeared that our high point was within 600' of the summit, so we didn't move camp higher. By our 10th day on the wall we could fix no more and packed for a summit push, not knowing if it was day or night. We left camp in poor visibility and light snow. Dempster excavated snow and ice from wide cracks above the high point. The angle finally eased, and Wilson quickly drilled up a blank slab to gain a corner. Then we saw the first blue skies in a week. The clouds sank, revealing the most impressive view imaginable.

I aided to a pendulum point, then Wilson began free climbing in rock shoes, using bare fingertips in snow-filled 5.10 cracks. He continued up an overhanging bowl and arrived at a ledge 10 feet from the summit. It had been 25 hours, and we rested and talked in the warm sun, gazing over distant summits protruding from the massive ice caps beyond the Stewart Valley.

Wilson and Dempster displayed their summit costumes: Dempster's hoola skirt and Wilson's inflatable monkey. We had succeeded on the most significant climb of our lives. We began rappelling and collecting hardware and ropes. We slept well that day.

Fourteen hours later we had a casual breakfast and packed our haulbags. I jumared to

retrieve two remaining ropes, while Dempster and Wilson arranged the lowering system.

Wilson had fixed a 300' static line to the anchors with a figure eight on a bight, leaving a 15' tail to safeguard himself while maneuvering around the anchors. He was clipped to the tail end with a Grigri. We would need another rope to reach the snowfield, so he clipped a spare cord to his harness. He didn't tie knots in either end of the 300' line.

Wilson would rappel first, then Dempster would lower the bags. I would descend last with the remaining ropes. Wilson must have forgotten that he was still on the short end and weighted the Grigri. He was speaking to Dempster as he began rappelling. It was the last time he was seen alive.

From above I heard Wilson's scream. I looked down to see him falling, impacting hundreds of feet below, and coming to rest 700' below. I descended to Dempster. There was enough rope to reach Wilson, so he rappelled, to be sure there was no pulse. He wanted to lower all the bags immediately, so he returned to the anchors to set up a lowering system. I descended to the snowfield to dock the bags, dodging the rocks they dislodged. Fifteen hours after waking, everything was near Wilson's body.

I drilled an anchor where Wilson rested, retrieved my personal haulbag, and continued rappelling. Dempster found a way to walk down and met Cowan and Shipman, explaining what had happened. Temperatures on the lake had turned styrofoam snow to wet slush. We post-holed to our knees in ice water, and the three-mile walk took five hours. At camp Shipman notified the police using our satellite phone, and we rested before retrieving Wilson.

After we got Wilson's body down, an outfitter snowmobiled to our camp and retrieved it. We carried camp to Sam Ford, and the police took Dempster and Wilson's body to Clyde River. Cowan, Shipman, and I waited for three more days for our outfitters, who told us that an unusually rainy spring had come early in the arctic. We were the last people in the region; a month had passed.

The Inuit gave us permission to name the mountain in Wilson's memory, and we named the route Grin and Barret (VI 5.11 A4-). Barret is the middle name Kyle and Drew shared. I will remember Drew for his simple approach to life, sense of humor, amazing climbing skills, and sharp intellect. I remember, once while discussing plans before the climb, I referred to it as a "project." Drew said, "I don't see this as a project. I'm just here in this beautiful place, under a beautiful wall, having fun climbing every day." For Drew Wilson, life on the wall was the life he loved most.



Jumaring high on the Wilson Wall soon after a storm clears the Stewart Valley. *Pete Dronkers*