

*Walker Citadel, The Mahayana Wall.* On May 9, Russel Mitrovich, Mike Libecki, and Josh Helling arrived in the small village of Clyde River, Baffin Island. The next day was spent traveling 60 miles across the frozen Arctic Ocean on snowmobile. The highly inspired expedition team pulled more than 600 pounds of food and equipment behind them. By May 12, they had already established Base Camp, and began climbing the 4,200-foot north face of the Walker Citadel.

The climb began with moderate aid and some mixed snow and ice. After fixing 550 feet of rope, the team hauled their seven haul bags under a large granite ceiling. This rock shelter became Camp I as they committed to a capsule-style ascent. They fixed two more steep aid pitches and one scary free climbing pitch. On May 17, a strong Arctic storm blew in, trapping them in their three-man portaledge for the next six days. The winds blew harshly as snow and ice encased their vertical world. With ropes frozen useless, the team was caged under their stormfly like prisoners. Soon the wall could hold no more snow and large avalanches crashed down the massive cliff. The first large avalanche to bombard them ripped their zippered nylon doors down to fill their portaledge with heavy snow. Hearts beating strongly, they endured more than one dozen similar events.

On May 23, they were finally able to climb in poor, but tolerable weather. The next 1,000 vertical feet were spent aid climbing through snow- and ice-filled cracks. On June 1, Russel, Mike, and Josh crawled onto a large snow-covered ledge to establish Camp IV under another large ceiling of rock. The tactics of such natural shelters would prove to save their lives repeatedly as rock, snow, and ice fell regularly from above. The rock quality was mostly good granite until pitch 17. The next 700 feet consisted of a red, rotten, decomposed gneiss. Difficulties were encountered not only in getting reliable protection, but also in finding secure anchor sites. With extremely heavy loads, the team managed to safely haul their bags with the help of a 600-foot static rope. Soon enough, the upper north-facing headwall became steeply overhanging and solid.

Beautiful corners led into a sky-scraping abyss. Blessed with mostly moderate but cold weather, they climbed consistently upward. At about 3,700 feet above the frozen sea ice, the late spring temperatures began to warm. Sky-blue meltwater flooded the once-white surface below. The three dedicated young men knew that sea ice break-up would soon be near. Fixing only one long pitch above Camp IV, they then made a lengthy push toward the summit. On June 13, Russel Mitrovich, Mike Libecki, and Josh Helling stood on top of the towering Walker Citadel, having established *The Mahayana Wall* (VII 5.10 A4).

The next three days were spent repacking haul bags and rappeling down the 4,200-foot Arctic wall. After 36 nightless days of focused climbing, the team was finally back to the watery base of the looming cliff. A dream once questioned possible was now entered forever into their lives.

JOSH HELLING

*The Fin, Nanuq.* From August 27 to September 7, Natxo Barriuso, Txus Lizarraga, Raul Melero and I, all from Basque Country, made the first ascent of The Fin in Sam Ford Fjord via the route *Nanuq* (VI 5.10 A3, 600m) on the wall's west-northwest face. We had attempt-