

ed the first three pitches in 1995. The first third of the route was aid climbing that wandered up the compact and overhanging wall, traversing along various roofs that forced us to attack the pitches from the side.

The second part is an obvious dihedral that continues to the summit. It featured beautiful granite climbing with chimneys and offwidths. The last pitches we climbed were iced up. The route featured almost 700 meters of climbing on 600 meters of wall.

We climbed capsule style, with only one camp on the wall before the dihedral. Six days were spent fixing the first part and seven were spent in hammocks. We reached the summit on September 7, then rapped the route. We approached the mouth of the fjord in canoes, with local guides from Clyde River.

MIGUEL BERAZALUCE, *Basque Country, Spain*

### Stewart Valley

*"Great Sail Peak," Northwest Face, Rum, Sodomy, and the Lash.* On May 18, I flew to the arctic village of Clyde River, Baffin Island, with Greg Child, Alex Lowe, Jared Ogden and David Hamlin. In Clyde, we met Gordon Wiltsie and John Catto, who had arrived early to do some filming with our Inuit outfitters. Our expedition, sponsored by the National Geographic Society and The North Face, had the intention of documenting the first ascent of Baffin Island's most northerly big wall. Gordon Wiltsie was on assignment to shoot stills for *National Geographic* magazine, as was videographer John Catto for the Explorer television series. David Hamlin, a producer for Explorer, would accompany us to Base Camp and then return home with the Inuit after dropping us off.

The real boon of this expedition was an aerial reconnaissance of the entire length of Baffin Island we did in order to choose our objective. We decided that the very best unclimbed wall in Baffin Island was located in the Stewart Valley, between Sam Ford and Gibbs Fjord. We chose a striking 3,800-foot cliff (ca. 5,300') as our objective.

On previous expeditions, it had taken less than 12 hours to reach Sam Ford by skidoo from Clyde River. This time around, hampered by stormy weather, it took us nine days to reach the Stewart Valley. This valley is probably an old fjord that once connected Sam Ford Fjord and Gibbs Fjord. Glacial moraine now blocks both ends of the valley, forming a narrow lake about ten miles long. We had realized from the start that getting our gear-laden komatiks across these land bridges onto the lake was going to be the crux of the approach. Using three interconnected skidoos to generate maximum horsepower, our Inuit guides skillfully ferried one komatik at a time through the boulderfield below Stewart Lake. It was a sobering exercise because we knew that once the snow melted, the Inuit would no longer be able to access this valley.

We chose a suitable sight for Base Camp under "Great Sail Peak," then bid farewell to David Hamlin and the guides from Qulliklut. Frustrated and antsy from the nine-day approach, we immediately began ferrying loads up 2,000 feet of loose slabs to the base of the wall. It took a week of three and four carries a day to get all our gear—23 haul bags' worth—packed up and ready to go. The first 1,700 feet of the wall, which was broken up and loose, led to a gigantic ledge, football fields wide, that traversed the entire length of the cliff. Above this was a vertical 2,000-foot headwall—the cleanest piece of rock I have seen in Baffin.

On the lower section of the wall we chose the steepest possible line to minimize objective



*Walls of the Stewart Valley. The 3,800-foot northwest face of "Great Sail Peak" is to the right, with Rum, Sodomy and the Lash marked. MARK SYNNOTT*

hazard and also to make hauling easier. Another week of brute manual labor enabled us to fix the choss wall and haul our 23 bags onto the big ledge. From the ledge camp, Greg, Jared, Alex and I began fixing pitches that followed a thin seam on the Half Dome-like headwall. The crack was continuous, yet thin enough that we made most of our progress with copperheads, hooks and tied-off pins. We fixed six long pitches to a point directly beneath the only roof of the route, the sight of our first and only hanging portaledge camp. With a 1,000-foot static line, we took turns hauling five bags at a time up to the bivy. It was a spectacular position, looming above Alex's A4+ pitch, "The Trade Winds." Eventually we secured our 23 haul bags between the three portaledges.

Splitting the roof directly above camp, a tiny copperhead seam shot through the impeccable Baffin gneiss. The crack was as splitter as the *Shield's* "Triple Cracks" or anything on *Sunkist*. Greg Child did us proud and led the whole thing without placing a single rivet. I cleaned the pitch and found that Greg had placed about 100 feet of small copperheads in a row. We all agreed it was darn close to A5. All told, on this section of the climb there were



seven pitches back-to-back of solid new-wave A4 or harder. What's really scary, though, is that we actually had to relead some of these pitches for the camera. The problem was that we couldn't shoot video and stills at the same time (due to conflicts with motor drives and flashes), so some pitches actually got led three times. All of this ate up lot of time, especially because the weather was quite often lousy.

After fixing for another week above the hanging camp, our three-ring, six-person circus finally topped out on June 25, 17 days since leaving the ground, having completed the route *Rum, Sodomy, and the Lash* (VI 5.10 A4+). We managed to summit on the most beautiful day of the expedition, allowing us ample time to enjoy the magnificent panorama. To our east and west, we could clearly make out the tops of the tallest peaks in Sam Ford and Gibbs Fjord. To the south and north, we could see out onto the Barnes Ice Cap and also across the vertiginous Arctic Ocean. On the way down, we spent three days at our hanging camp waiting out bad weather in hopes of doing more filming. The weather proved entirely uncooperative, so we eventually bailed, sending down some of the cargo by express mail.

In Base Camp, all of the snow had completely melted and we realized once and for all that the Inuit would never make it in to pick us up. It also wasn't realistic for us to ferry all our gear ten miles to the mouth of Sam Ford Fjord. Luckily, a helicopter was in the area doing land claim surveys, and the pilot agreed to pick us up for roughly the same fee we would have paid the outfitter. Checking out "Great Sail Peak" and the other still-virgin formations of Stewart Valley from the chopper window was a fitting end to my third expedition to Baffin Island.

MARK SYNNOTT

*Baffin Island, A Glimpse into the Future.* Prolific big waller Mark Synnott has made three trips to Baffin Island, including last year's (see above) on which he made an aerial reconnaissance of potential objectives. An overview of some of what the future might hold for the island appears as an article earlier in this journal.

## ELLESMERE ISLAND

*Ellesmere Island, Barbeau Peak and Various Ascents.* In June, an expedition to Ellesmere Island made a rare ascent of Barbeau Peak, highest point in the Canadian Arctic, and cleared up some confusion concerning its location. The eight-man party was composed of Dan Bennett, Jack Bennett, Tom Budlong, Tony Daffern, Pete Ford, Dave Rotheroe, Bill Salter, and Greg Slayden.

The best topographic maps do not clearly indicate the location of the peak. Hattersley-Smith, a member of the first ascent party in 1967, gives its location as 81° 55' N, 75° 1' W. However, Errington, leader of the second ascent party, locates Barbeau Peak as the one at 81° 53' N, 75° 17' W, over three miles to the southwest (see *AAJ* 1982, p. 176, sketch map).

Our party flew by chartered Twin Otter from Resolute to the North Ellesmere Icecap and established their first camp at 81° 57' 44" N, 75° 30' 40" W on June 14. Conditions during the week on the icecap were ideal: temperatures of about 30 to 40°F, perfectly clear, soft snow, and no major crevasses. From camp, Daffern, Ford and Slayden set off for what appeared to