



AAC Publications

Peak 9,331', Northeast Face, and New Routes on Mt. Grenville and Galleon Peak

Canada, British Columbia, Coast Mountains, Homathko Icefield

I FIRST LAID EYES upon the beautiful northeast face of Peak 9,331' while walking across the Homathko Icefield in the early summer of 2016. Upon returning to the frontcountry, I was excited to find that the peak had not been climbed. Later that summer, I asked Fred Giroux if he would be interested in a mostly human-powered mission to the area. He was, and we spent the winter planning and training.

On May 15, Fred and I began our epic journey out to the Homathko Icefield. We took a water taxi up Bute Inlet to Homathko Camp, then trekked across the Teaquahan Valley to the Galleon Valley. For four and a half days we slogged through the bush, skied, and were tossed around by our packs until we reached a campsite half a kilometer from Mt. Grenville (10,001'). We hadn't weighed our packs, but we did decide to name them: Fred's was Soul Crusher, and mine was Suffer Sack. We estimated them at around 85 pounds each.

On May 25 we headed to the northwest face of Mt. Grenville. The face had been climbed in September 1991 by Michael Down and Alan Fletcher (on a heli-supported expedition), via a beautiful snow slope of about 50° to reach a ridge and then a gentle walk to the summit. To the right of that snow slope is a gorgeous steep face of snow, ice, and rock. We ascended a mostly iced-up line on that face to an upper right-trending ramp. After pitching out the crux headwall, we simul-climbed the ridge to the summit. We named our new line (as we did with all the routes on this trip) after a character or place from Gabriel García Márquez' *One Hundred Years of Solitude*: Melquíades (350m, AI4 M4+).

The next day we were up early and descending to the base of the northeast face of Peak 9,331'. We moved quite quickly and climbed this route in 2.5 hours from base to summit, ascending steep snow to a 75° ice step on the west side of the glacier. There was significant overhead hazard on this route, so moving fast was essential. We named our route Remedios the Beauty (600m, AI3). On the summit we honored my friend Cory Hall by spreading some of his ashes. Cory was an incredible climber and a wonderful friend who passed away in 2014 while climbing Pirámide in Peru.

After climbing these two fine lines and skiing the north ridge of Mt. Grenville, we decided to head back to the toe of the Bute Glacier and try the north side of Mt. Bute via a potential new line. But with warm temperatures and constant snow movement, we decided instead to ramble our way up the south side of Galleon Peak. On this face, we mostly scrambled on dry rock, roping up only for four pitches of fun climbing. We called this route Macondo (600m, 5.10). This was possibly the second ascent of Galleon Peak, which was first climbed by Coast Mountain legends John Clarke and Jeff Eppler in September 1988.

With weather moving in, we decided to retreat. After six and a half hours of shwacking, linking the strands of flagging tape that mark the route, we made it back to Homathko Camp on June 1. We were finally picked up and ferried back to Campbell River by friends Carrie Smith and Shayne Vollmers on June 4. Our trip was supported by the John Lauchlan Memorial Award, as well as Mountain Equipment Co-op, Arc'teryx, Yamnuska, the Alpine Club of Canada, Calgary Foundation, Lake O'Hara Lodge, Explore Magazine, Rab Equipment, Tony and Gillean Kaffern, Don Milliken, and Bill Hanlon.

Max Fisher, Canada

Images



Fred Giroux climbing on the northwest face of Mt. Grenville.



Map showing the approach and peaks climbed in 2017 by Max Fisher and Fred Giroux. The view is looking east.



Fred Giroux climbing on the northeast face of Peak 9,331' during the mountain's likely first ascent.



Max Fisher follows a pitch on the south side of Galleon Peak.



Fred Giroux descending to the base of Peak 9,331's northeast face before the first ascent.



The route line for Macondo (600m, 5.10) on the south side of Galleon Peak.



The route line for Melquíades (350m, AI4 M4+) on the northwest face of Mt. Grenville.



The route line for Remedios the Beauty (AI3 600m) on the northeast face of Peak 9,331'.



Fred Giroux approaching Mt. Grenville's northwest Face.

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