



AAC Publications

Sacajawea Peak, Grand Central Couloir and Right Ventricle

Idaho, Lost River Range

In 2016, Joe Crane and I ventured into Idaho's Lost River Range to pit ourselves against the unrepeated Broken Wings (400m, WI5, Dickerson-Lords-Mordicai, AAJ 2006) on the north face of Sacajawea Peak (11,936'). Due to the fickle nature of mixed climbing in the Lost River Range, we were not successful until our third attempt. Beautiful smears of ephemeral ice, tight chimneys, and spicy mixed climbing left us hungry for more.

In June 2017, Joe and I returned with intentions of establishing a new line on the center of the face. As we walked by Gold Digger (250m, WI4 M7, Avenius-Lords, 2008) on the nearby Golden Pillar, our hearts sank when we noticed all the ice had melted and fallen off. We set up camp and murmured about how we might have waited too long. As the sun set we scoped our intended line and saw very little ice, save for a section up high that looked promising.

In hindsight most of the ice was difficult to see because of the deep chimneys on our line. At the start, easy climbing up a snow apron brought us to the base of a narrow chimney. Initial dry-tool moves around a small roof led to steep snow and fresh ice that was pouring over several chockstones. The chimney eventually widened into a steep couloir that provided mellow snow climbing. This ended at the base of a meter-wide chimney that was full of perfect one-swing ice. This dream-like chimney continued for approximately 160m, save for a small snow patch in the middle. The chimney then constricted so tight that the leader was forced to turn sideways. Fresh smears of ice lined the walls of the constriction, and rotten snow mushrooms filled the back. One last overhanging mushroom at the top of the constriction greeted the leader, after which the chimney widened into a pleasant couloir that deposited us 20m east of the summit—Grand Central Couloir (440m, WI4+/5- M5).

A year later to the day, Joe and I found ourselves back at the base of Sacajawea's north face. A cold front was forecasted to have limited duration, so we started up a shorter line on the left side of the face. Mellow snow climbing through a narrow passage led to a large, heart-shaped bowl, where two obvious lines begin. After noticing signs of rockfall coming out of the left line, we opted to head right. We entered a narrow couloir that offered steep snow and Styrofoam ice, with mellow mixed moves around a series of chockstones. Toward the top, the couloir turned abruptly left and then veered back right before terminating at the base of a narrow chimney that was lined with beautiful ice and wild snow formations. Once again, the chimney was so tight we were forced to turn sideways and apply a mixture of squeeze chimney technique paired with traditional ice climbing to make upward progress. With one tool and crampon on ice and the others on rock, we slowly worked upward through this lovely chimney system for a pitch and a half before following a pleasant snow couloir to the ridge—Right Ventricle (220m from the top of the Heart, WI4 M3).

– Dallin Carey

Images



The north face of Sacajawea Peak (11,936') in Idaho's Lost River Range, showing the two routes completed by Dallin Carey and Joe Crane in 2017 and 2018: Right Ventricle (220m, WI4 M3) is in blue, and Grand Central Couloir (440m, WI4+/5- M5) is in green. The original mixed line on the face, Broken Wings (400m, WI5, Dickerson-Lords-Mordecai, 2005), is in red. A 13-pitch rock route has been completed on the face to the right of Grand Central Couloir.



Typical terrain encountered by Dallin Carey and Joe Crane during the first ascent of Grand Central Couloir (440m, WI4+/5- M5) on the north face of Sacajawea Peak (11,936') in Idaho's Lost River Range.

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