



## AAC Publications

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### **Mt. Lewis, Sacrificial Dread**

United States, California, Eastern Sierra

**Tad McCrea and I stumbled upon the east face of Mt. Lewis (ca 12,350') in mid-November during a failed ice climbing foray to nearby Parker Falls.** After finding not enough ice and too much snow, we wandered up to the Walker Lake trailhead. I'd been curious to see Mt. Lewis from up close—it's the only granitic peak in the netherworld of choss between Tioga Pass and June Lake, and I knew of only one recorded route (Fiddler-Keating, 1980, IV 5.10), which the first ascensionists described as "loose and not recommended." We were more interested in ice this time of year, so we hooted and hollered when we saw the winter potential in this hidden glacial cirque. A big October snowstorm in the high country had set up some fantastic ice and mixed climbing opportunities on this face. We spent Thanksgiving with our families drooling over turkey and our set of reconnaissance photos.

Tad and I returned on December 4, finding even better conditions than we had seen two weeks prior. The mostly dry approach took about two hours, with some post-holing in the latter half. We chose the most obvious line: a narrow ribbon of cascading ice and snow fed by a small sunlit bowl on the ridgeline above.

After a short solo up onto the buttress, we roped up and climbed eight pitches of moderate but sustained alpine ice, bullet-hard névé, and easy 5th-class mixed to the shoulder of Mt. Lewis' eastern subsummit. All pitches were engaging and delicate, with thin névé and tricky protection in the polished quartz monzonite rock. By the third pitch, I was trash-talking the classic Mendel Couloir, and by the sixth pitch we agreed this was one of the best winter routes either of us had climbed in the High Sierra. At the base of the final chimney, we traversed off right onto a mixed rock ramp to avoid a difficult overhanging chockstone exit.

A relatively quick descent along the north ridge looped back down east into the cirque, following a steep snow gully. We used an alpine rack of nuts and cams to three inches, a couple of thin pitons, and four short ice screws; a Spectre or two could have been useful. We called the route Sacrificial Dread (1,100', IV AI3+ 5.5).

— Richard Shore

## Images



Looking up at Sacrificial Dread on the east face of Mt. Lewis.



Tad McCrea enjoying the endless styrofoam climbing on Sacrificial Dread, east face of Mt. Lewis.



Tad McCrea leading the crux thin-ice pitch on the east face of Mt. Lewis.



Tad McCrea preparing to traverse out from under the overhang blocking the exit on Sacrificial Dread, east face of Mt. Lewis.



The 1,100-foot ice line of Sacrificial Dread on the east face of Mt. Lewis.

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