

A New Route on the Petit Dru

West Face Direct

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IN JULY, Gary Hemming and I made a new route on the northwest shoulder of the Dru, one of the most striking peaks in the Mont Blanc massif. This route, about 1600 feet long on a 3000-foot face, terminates when it meets the regular west face route at the famous 90-Meter Dihedral. The route is very direct and involves almost no snow and ice climbing. There is considerable direct-aid work and several areas of difficult free climbing. We placed 96 pitons and removed 94.

One abortive attempt preceded the successful effort. On this occasion we passed a comfortable night at the 1000-foot level only to be awakened in the morning by showers and a strong south wind. Lightning counseled descent, which we accomplished without much fuss simply by rappelling straight down to the glacier, leaving a fixed line over the hardest pitch.

The successful ascent was started a few days later and completed in 2½ days. The weather favored us with two perfectly cloudless warm days. It broke on the third day with strong winds and snow showers, but nothing of real consequence. We reached the *Bloc Coincé*, a large detached block at the base of the 90-Meter Dihedral, in the early afternoon of the second day, then proceeded up the west-face route to where it meets the north-face route. We climbed the north face to the Bonatti Pillar and followed the Pillar route to the *voie normale*, whereby we reached the summit at 11:30 A.M. on July 26, 1962. On the Bonatti Pillar we met two young Swiss, Erich Friedli and Hans Peter Trachsel, superb alpinists who gave us a humbling lesson in how to get rapidly off a mountain under alpine conditions.

