



# Extreme Eiger: The Race to Climb the Eiger Direct (Legends and Lore)

*Peter Gillman, Leni Gillman*

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- The classic story of a notorious climb, a literal race to ascend Europe's most formidable mountain wall between Brits/Americans versus Germans

The North Face of the Eiger was long renowned as the most dangerous climb in the Swiss Alps, one that had cost the lives of numerous skilled mountaineers. In February 1966, two teams—one German, the other British/American—aimed to climb it in a straight line from bottom to top. Astonishingly, the two teams knew almost nothing about each other's attempt until both arrived at the foot of the face. The race was on.

The Anglo-American team of John Harlin, Layton Kor, and Dougal Haston intended to make a dash to the summit when conditions were right. The Germans, with an eight-man team and a mass of equipment, planned a slow, relentless ascent. Watching all was a young journalist, Peter Gillman. Now, fifty years later, Gillman recalls the dramatic events on the North Face, and assesses their effect on those who took part. The charismatic and controversial American climber John Harlin was killed before the summit was reached, while others were permanently injured through frostbite. For British photographer Chris Bonington, who was sucked into the action, it opened a path to a career and reputation as Britain's foremost mountaineer.

*“It was incredibly challenging and probably some of the hardest climbing done in the Alps to that time,”* remembers Bonington. *“Being involved was absolutely fantastic. There’s never been anything like it for me, before or since.”*



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