

Alternative Rock

NEW ROUTES AND RECORDS FOR A CLASSIC CLIMBING BOOK

By Michael Virtanen

LIKE MINERS, JEREMY HAAS AND JIM Lawyer are prospecting in the Adirondack forest for its hidden wealth of crags. Last year and again this season they are collecting new climbing routes and remapping old ones for *Adirondack Rock*, the successor to a venerable series of guidebooks, which they plan to publish in 2008.

"We have many cliffs that are well hidden way in the woods, and a large part of our fieldwork is locating these cliffs," Haas says. "We need to be pretty savvy about the time of year because of leaf cover, and we're getting very good at bushwhacking and thinking more like woodsmen than the sort of rock climber many people envision."

The authors are asking other technical climbers to add to the roughly 175 cliffs and thousands of routes they've identified, many of them outside the popular climbing destination of Keene Valley.

"There's a big list on the Web site [www.adirondackrock.com]," Lawyer says. "It doesn't tell you where the crags are. But somebody looks at that list and says, 'Oooh yeah, Mitchell Ponds Mountain. I've been there. I'd better get my route in.'"

Haas, 33, a science teacher at Saratoga Springs High School, is also a part-time climbing guide for

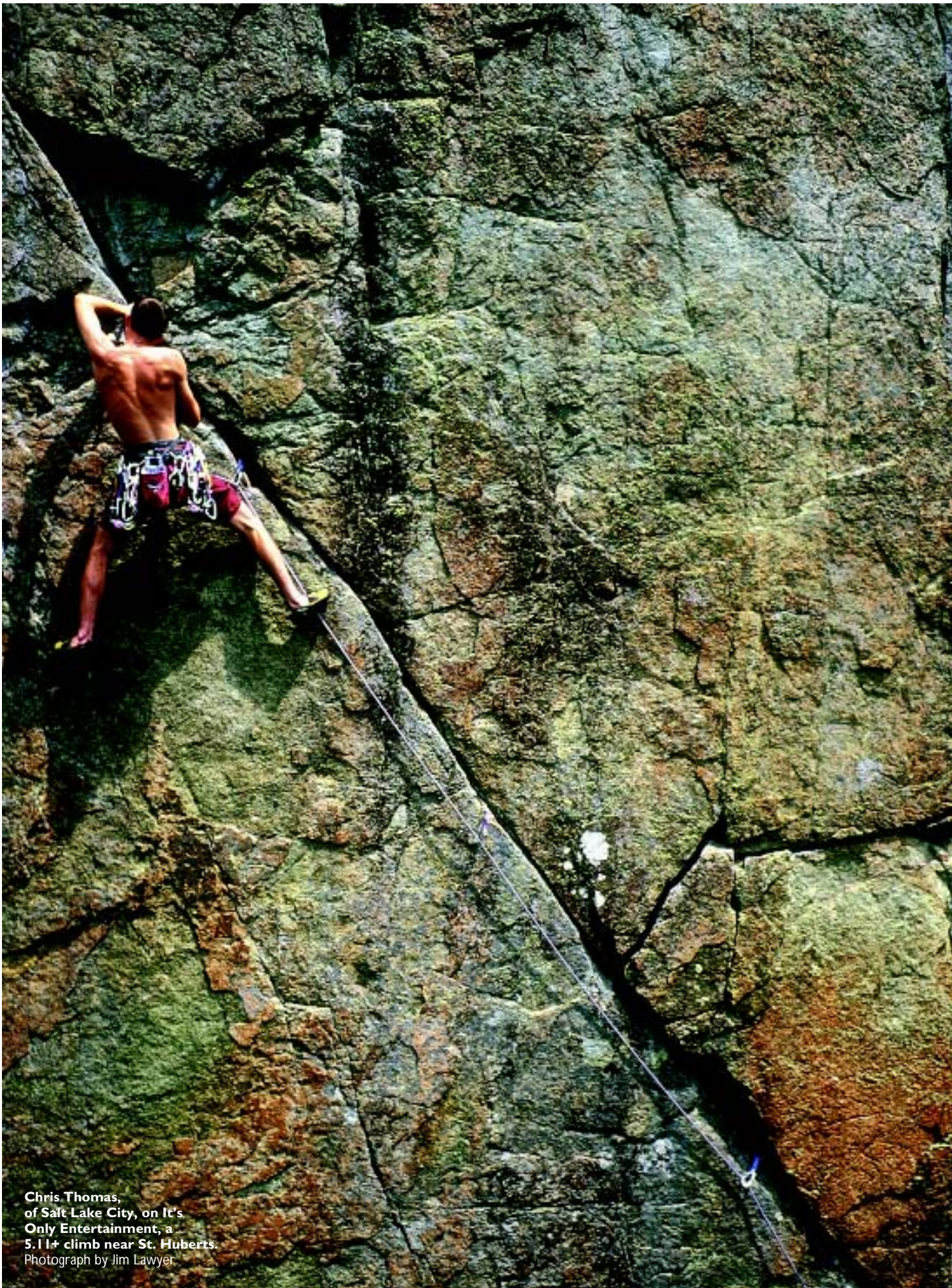
Adirondack Rock and River, in Keene. Lawyer, 41, retired six years ago from his computer software job in the Syracuse area. After he built a house in New Russia, the guidebook became his new project.

The two have ascended many routes up to 5.11 difficulty (the range is 5.1 to 5.15, and only a handful of climbs rate harder than 5.11 in the Adirondacks) and talked with other climbers, including those credited with first ascents. Their goal is accuracy in route descriptions and consistency in difficulty ratings. They are making topographical maps and diagrams that note natural features as well as existing hardware (bolts that climbers hook onto).

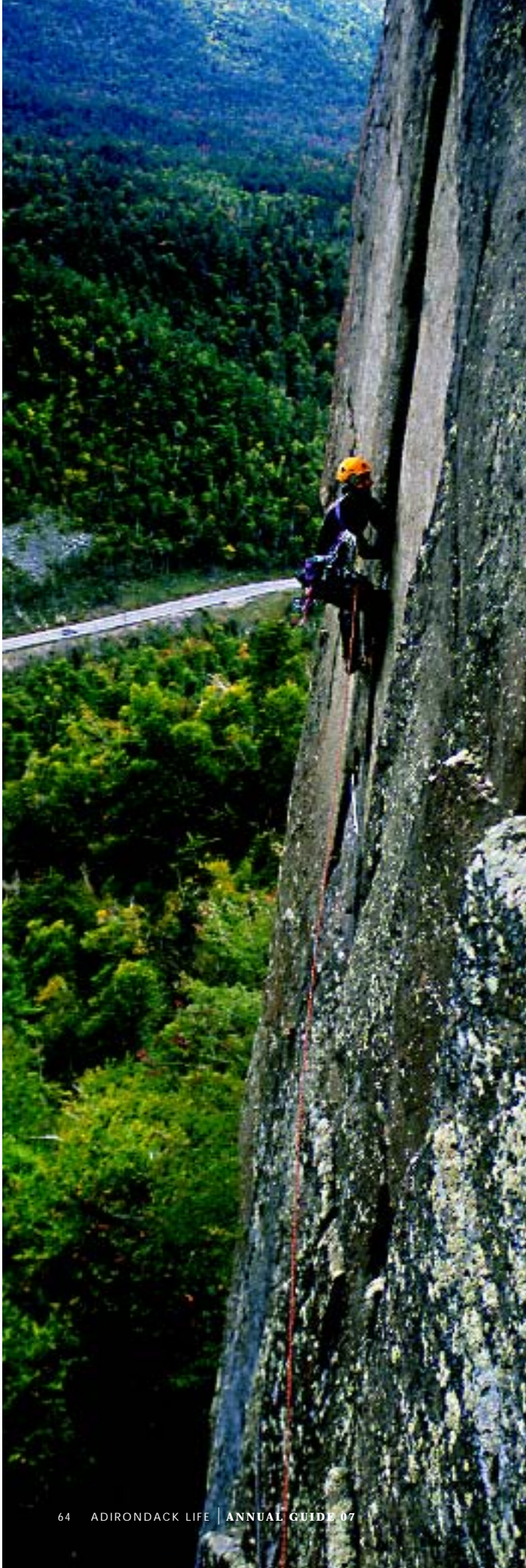
"There's an untold number of new places in the south," Lawyer says, such as crags on Pilot Knob and Stewarts Ledge on the east side of Lake George. "Lake George is going to be a big destination after this book comes out."

Another discovery is Potash Mountain near Lake Luzerne, in Saratoga County. "The bottom of Potash probably has 20 routes 5.10 and up, and they're all good. Jeremy developed almost every one," Lawyer says.

"There's a dozen cliffs in the Indian Lake area," Haas adds after a spring day snowshoeing to check out two. The southern mountains have fewer trails



Chris Thomas,
of Salt Lake City, on It's
Only Entertainment, a
5.11+ climb near St. Huberts.
Photograph by Jim Lawyer



and different geology than the High Peaks, he explains. “In many ways you have a greater sense of wildness.”

In the western Adirondacks, Lawyer notes some good crags outside Old Forge and farther north in the Five Ponds Wilderness. “The west side of the park, there’s not as much rock. A lot of these crags are down in the trees. They don’t require the High Peaks to be a pretty stellar little crag.”

THE PAIR ARE ALSO SOLICITING STORIES AND PHOTOGRAPHS to inject some of the sport’s passion into the usually bloodless guidebook genre. The last Adirondack rock book, *Climbing in the Adirondacks*, described 900 routes and

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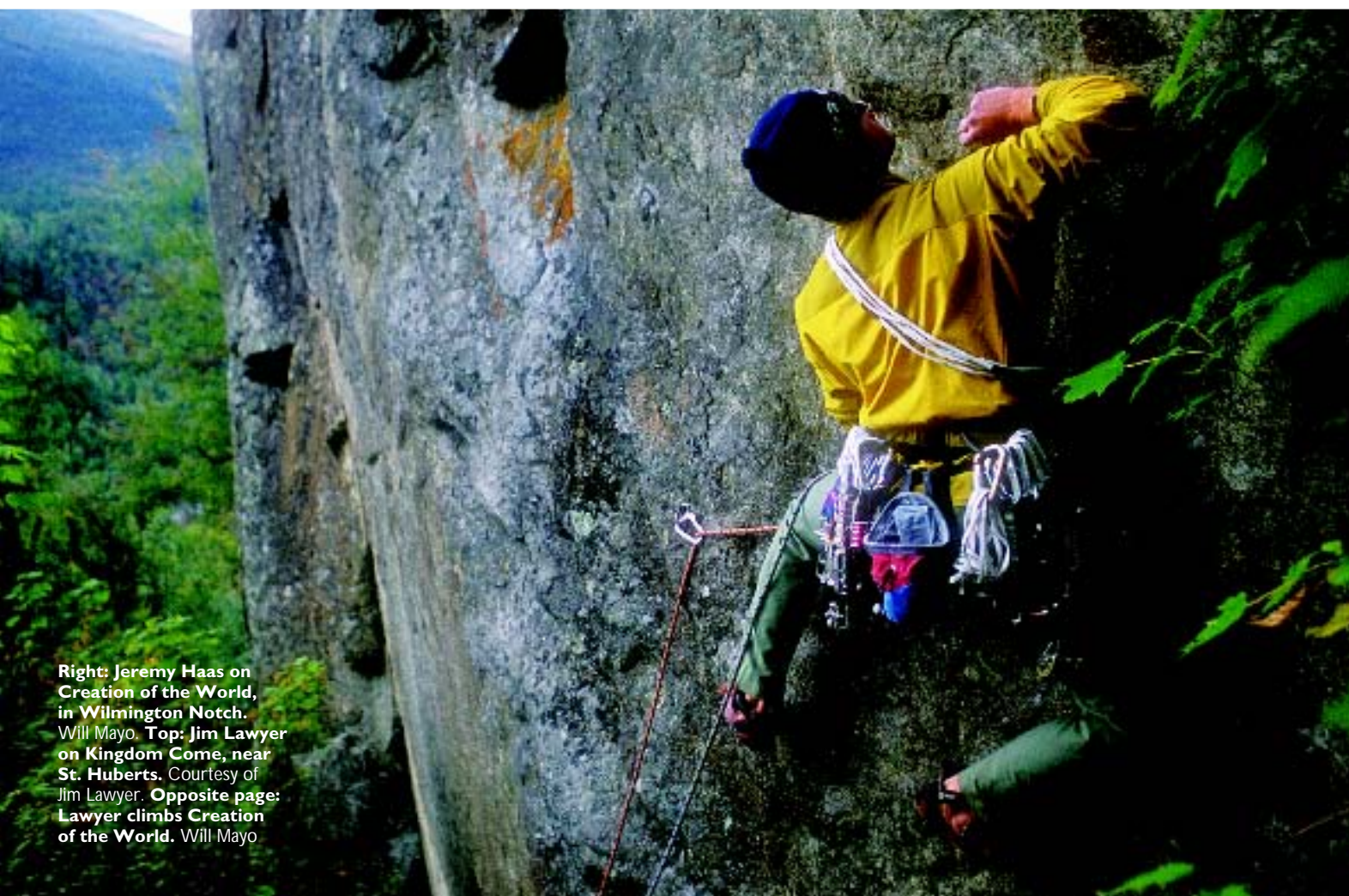
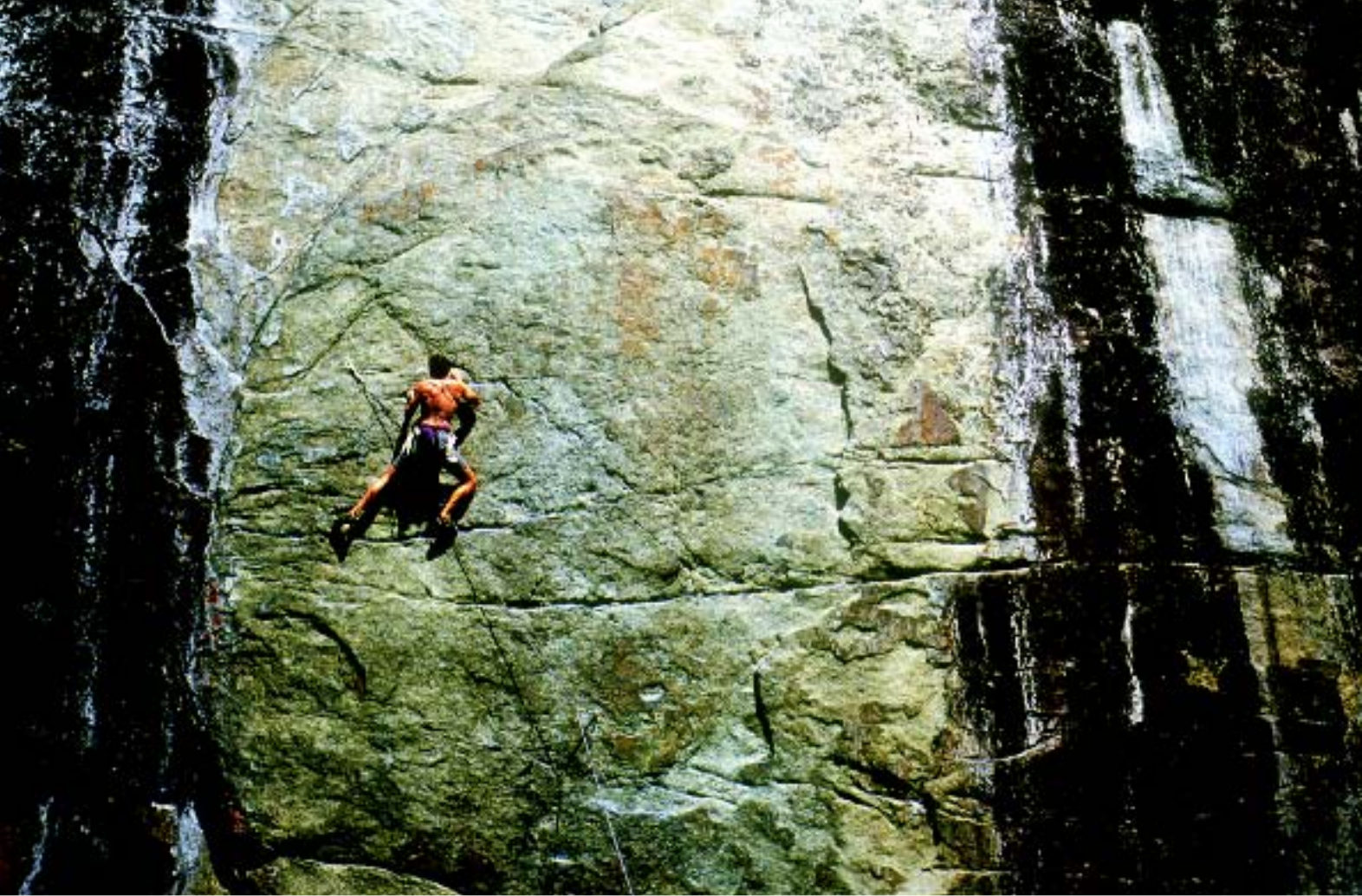
was published in 1995 by the Adirondack Mountain Club. It was written by Lake Placid climber Don Mellor, who passed the job along with his blessing. He also authored editions in 1988 and 1983. Mellor was preceded by Tom Rosecrans in 1976 and Trudy Healy in 1972 and 1967.

The new authors might self-publish to keep copyright and control of the content, Lawyer says. The book won’t list routes for ice climbing—Mellor did a separate guide a year ago—but it will include some information on bouldering.

Their research promises to revise some history. For example, a recently found handwritten account by Henry Ives Baldwin, a Saranac Laker who would go on to become New Hampshire’s first state research forester, describes a roped climb of Wallace, the largest cliff in New York, in 1920, some 16 years earlier than John Case, who was credited with the 800-foot first ascent. Case, the former president of the American Alpine Club and summer resident of Keene Valley, was among the first to use ropes and modern belay techniques on Adirondack cliffs.

Case was one of the few people climbing here in the early days, recalls Jim Goodwin, 97, of Keene Valley, who explored with him and is credited with several first ascents. Goodwin welcomes the rewrite: “I think there’s no question in a place like the Adirondacks there could have been all sorts of original ascents that just weren’t reported.” 🍃

To contact Haas and Lawyer visit www.adirondackrock.com or call (315) 677-5272.



Right: Jeremy Haas on Creation of the World, in Wilmington Notch.
Will Mayo. **Top: Jim Lawyer on Kingdom Come, near St. Huberts.** Courtesy of Jim Lawyer. **Opposite page: Lawyer climbs Creation of the World.** Will Mayo