

Introducing



KUIU®

ULTRALIGHT HUNTING

By Jason Hairston

EDITOR'S NOTE

Avid readers of *The Huntin' Fool* know that I am a lightweight gear fanatic. I would even say it's a passion of mine. I've worked for years on my "Extreme Backpack Gear List" and my "30 Pound Pack" concept and am constantly searching for top of the line lighter weight gear. That's why when Jason Hairston called and talked about starting a new company that was focused on ultralight hunting gear I was unbelievably excited.

I have known Jason since he co-founded one of the best gear companies in the industry, Sitka. This guy has a true passion for producing the best product possible. His business model is unique and his goal is to build the best lightweight hunting gear possible and sell it direct to a limited clientele. As of March 31, 2011 KUIU is open for business. Jason has already developed some ground breaking new products. Check them out at www.kuiu.com and stay tuned for more products from KUIU.

—Garth

Kuiu (pronounced *koo-you*) is named after a remote island in southeast Alaska I have hunted, an Island where the year-round population is 10.

I created KUIU for two basic reasons: to make the lightest and best performing system of Ultralight Hunting kit possible. From an integrated skin-to-shell layering system, to packs and accessories, and to completely transform or "game change" the entire customer experience. From product education and transparency to our *direct* pricing model - a model that makes available the best fabrics and manufacturing process possible, and to the broadest possible range of customers.

I started bowhunting with my father and older brother when I was old enough to walk. We lived in southern California, hunting locally and in places like Catalina Island, and traveled often to northern California, Utah, and Colorado. As I got older our hunts became more and more of an adventure. By the time I was in high school and on my way to college, I was using a backpack to get into more remote areas and for days at a time.

Dissatisfied with the gear that was available, and because I was spending a considerable amount of time in the mountains and more reliant than ever on how well my clothing performed, I decided to enter the hunting market. I wanted to make a line of technical and functional hunting clothing. So in 2005, I co-founded Sitka Gear but left in 2009 when W.L. Gore bought the company.

I knew my experience creating and building Sitka was invaluable. I also knew the learning curve, from a consumer with a dream and a garage-office, to an industry-leading company, would serve me well on my next venture.



KUIU Founder Jason Hairston



The 17.75 ounce Guide Jacket



The 13.2 ounce Chugach Pant



The 13.5 ounce Spindrift Jacket



The Merino-250 bottoms



The Merino 250 Zip-T

This time I wanted to make a “system” of clothing focused on saved weight, increased durability and performance, while unhindered or limited in any way by cost concerns. I wanted to use the most technical fabrics and processes available. I wanted to make the best, regardless of what it would cost me. I also wanted to figure out how I could do all this and still manage to retail it at affordable prices!

I started a year and a half ago, sourcing the finest mills, product developers, technical cut and sew houses, and industry innovators throughout the world. I developed a relationship with New Zealand’s The Merino Company to source and develop our merino base-layer program. And from Japan, I’m working with Toray, to develop a waterproof & breathable 4-way stretch rain shell system, soft shell and stretch woven programs. And from England, I sourced Pittards Leather for our gloves.

To ensure manufacturing quality and reliability, I have partnered with one of the world’s premier technical sewing houses located in Vancouver, Canada.

With every vendor and throughout the entire process I have focused on weight. The result: a layering system 4 pounds lighter than any other system on the market.

I have also been working with a domestic industrial design group to develop and patent the world’s first molded carbon fiber backpack frame. A frame that, while it weighs a mere 13 oz, can comfortably, reliably, and efficiently carry 100 pound loads. The Icon Carbon Fiber Frame also represents a new “hybrid-style” pack design. It has the load carrying capability of an external frame pack with the comfort and flexibility of an internal frame pack. This new carbon fiber technology both reduces overall pack weight and also allows a modular pack system - one frame, two different pack sizes, all three sold individually.

The internet has forever changed the nature of retail sales. Consumers no longer need to rely on retail sales people and retail outlets for product specifications and education. Specific information, distinct information, detailed information, all of it, is now literally at our fingertips. With access to the right sites and resources,

The 13 ounce KUIU Carbon Fiber Backpack Frame



The KUIU ICON 6000 Pack



we (everyone) can research products and brands, read unbiased reviews, post reviews, post complaints, share first hand experiences, exchange opinions, and become our very own experts. In keeping with this phenomenon, everything you'll either need to know or want to know about KUIU, will be available at kuiu.com. Product information, sizing, weight, attributes, technical specifications, etc, will be clearly and readily presented. Transparency in terms of research, design and field testing will be, as it has been for the last year, readily available on Building KUIU - a blog I write and will continue to directly maintain. We have also hired Brendan Burns, an accomplished mountain hunter and respected guide with a wealth of experience, to be the KUIU Personal Outfitting Specialist. Brendan will be available by phone and by appointment for those customers with specific needs and requirements. We are thoroughly committed to the best customer experience possible.

The direct connection between the customer and KUIU means accurate, insightful, and readily available information. It also means we can sell direct and avoid traditional retail mark-up, which means we can sell our products for roughly half the usual price. It also means we can sell a level of quality and performance that many of our customers wouldn't otherwise be able to obtain. All this ultimately

makes it possible for us to source the best fabrics, build the best finished products, and sell them for less than our competitors.

KUIU is not just a business. It's a philosophy and an attitude born from the tradition of mountain hunting. I love hunting. I love the exposure to weather and the elements, and to my own physical challenges and limitations. And as much as I love the stalk and the kill, I also love the entire experience regardless of the outcome: the travel, the way the planes get smaller and smaller the closer I get to the final destination, the game trails, the glaciers, the streams and rivers, the side-hilling, the bush and the bramble, and, of course, the animals like Stone sheep, Grizzly, and Mountain caribou, all of them! To honor my love for hunting and your love for hunting, KUIU has embarked on an endeavor to document the people and places and companies that make mountain hunting what is - to photograph and write and video to the guides, the hunts, and the mountains that have inspired KUIU. The project is called The Hunt. It will be available exclusively online at kuiu.com, in select magazines, and in limited edition print pieces. We're inspired and committed to mountain hunting, and we hope KUIU and The Hunt will inspire you.

