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As he embarked on his first mountain climb, six years ago in the Swiss Alps, Michael Markesbery found that no matter what he did, he couldn't get warm. Perhaps even worse, the ineffective insulation he wore was so puffy it made him look like the Michelin Man. There had to be a better way.

"Everything starts with a problem," Markesbery says today. "Entrepreneurship is just a continuous series of science experiments."

As it happens, Markesbery's ensuing experiments led to the founding of the space-age outerwear company Oros, which last month launched a

new line featuring 13 styles of the warmest clothing ever. As a premed student at Miami University in Ohio in 2014, he earned a scholarship from the Astronaut Scholarship Foundation. While digging into all things NASA, he stumbled upon aerogel, a class of synthetic material in which the liquid part of a gel is replaced with gas. First created in 1931, the material—nicknamed "frozen smoke" or "solid air"—is perhaps the lightest and best insulator in the universe. (NASA has used it on the Mars Rovers.) "Space is -455 degrees Fahrenheit," Markesbery notes. "It doesn't get much colder than that."

Space, the Final Fashion Frontier

How Oros uses NASA-
inspired technology
to create the warmest
apparel on (and off)
the planet

By Maggy Lehmicke



The Men's
Ski Hero and
Women's
Voyager
Hero jackets,
from Oros's
fall 2019 line

Markesbery and his cofounder, Rithvik Venna, used Markesbery's scholarship money to work with aerogel manufacturers to turn the brittle material into something that was both flexible and durable enough for apparel. The result, Solarcore, is 70 percent warmer than, and half as bulky as, most insulators. (It also maintains 95 percent of its performance when compressed.)

In 2015, the two men formed Oros and launched their first Solarcore consumer product, the Orion Parka. With

Oros's revenue doubling each year since its inception, the company is building on the success of that initial collection with this fall's line, which features jackets, leggings, sportswear, and accessories such as gloves and beanies. Staying true to the original mission, Markesbery says he and Venna are continuing to test their designs in severe conditions across the globe. One of the next stops on their list? The Swiss Alps.

Oros products are available exclusively at orosapparel.com.

Zach Ancell Photography (models); Arctic Images/Getty Images (moon)