



I N N O V A T I V E C L I M B I N G E Q U I P M E N T



# Seneca Short

Photo courtesy Arthur C. Kearns / The Gendarme

by Goose Kearse

For years I had heard the lore of Seneca Rocks, that improbable looking fin of rock that sticks up out of the valley floor and rises nearly 900 feet above the river below. Tall tales of run out protection, stiff grades and instant exposure filled my heart with a mixture of excitement and trepidation as I drove down into the valley and caught my first view of that magnificent formation of rock. It was late October, and the cold weather had begun to set in for the season. As my truck rolled down WV Hwy 33 into the small town, I thought back a few weeks prior to when I planned the visit. I had called my friend Arthur C. Kearns, the owner of The Gendarme, the climbing shop in Seneca, and the head guide for Seneca Rocks Climbing School. "I've never been climbing at Seneca", I told him, "and if I don't get up there soon I might never make it." Now I'm not normally given to hyperbole, but this wasn't a stretch, since I've started to fall apart at an ever increasing rate. With a little more prodding, ACK agreed to meet up with me, and the plan was laid.

The next morning we started the brief walk through the meadow in front of the National Park Service visitor center toward the massive rock fin that dominates the valley. The air was brisk, the grass lightly crusted with an early frost. Our first idea was to do a route in the freezing shadow of the monolith, but luckily it was taken by a more eager party of climbers working their way through its first pitch, so we moved to the east side for sunnier conditions. Our first route, after a bit of easy chimney stepping, was a two pitch classic Dufty's Popoff. The route was rated 5.7, and having just successfully climbed a 5.9 at the New two days prior, I knew that it was well within my arsenal. Hubris!

The first pitch was relatively mild, particularly since ACK was doing the sharp end. He left me belaying atop a nice ledge and began moving less rapidly up through a dihedral that appeared to terminate beneath a roof. I assumed the easy climbing must be beyond my vision from the ledge, and continued to belay and try and provide polite conversation. After ACK moved out of sight past the roof, he climbed for a few minutes longer before setting a belay and beckoning me upward. I climbed up through the dihedral reasonably securely, but then couldn't believe my luck when I arrived underneath the roof and sunk my wrist up and into a hand jam where the roof met the wall below. As I surveyed the face to the right of the roof, thinking it the obvious exit, I realized that if the face were the exit, the way out from under the roof looked like about a half mile of hard laybacking. (Now by this time you've figured out that I'm no rock star. Back in the day, as we like to say around the old geezer's home, I was at best a 5.10 climber.)

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## Made In The USA / Our Green Manifesto

Seems that lots of companies are going green these days. At Misty Mountain we applaud and encourage efforts to reduce pollution, waste, and negative environmental impacts. Our years experiencing the forests, cliffs and rivers of the Southern Appalachian Range has taught us to care for the World in which we work and live.

We have always felt the key to our success was to make the finest climbing harnesses in the world. A constant design criteria at Misty Mountain is to build durability into each product to maximize its lifespan. It's our philosophy that this can be accomplished in a manner that is respectful of all involved - customers, employees, vendors, owners and the Earth.

Misty Mountain manages all of its operations responsibly and sustainably. Our products are made in the United States, in our folksy yet state of the art textile facility in North Carolina. Manufacturing locally means that we provide employment for skilled workers in a shrinking manufacturing economy. Manufacturing locally also cuts down substantially on total freight costs in both dollars and carbon emissions, as our products aren't sent via container from the other side of the planet.

We further reduce our carbon footprint by reusing corrugated boxes from local retailers and suppliers for all of our outgoing shipments. Product designs and manufacturing processes are optimized to minimize waste and promote recycling. Minimal packaging and plastics use has been a hallmark of our brand for years. Streamlining all of our processes to conserve energy use is an ongoing project at Misty Mountain.

Misty Mountain is committed to being a responsible corporation, and we thank you for your support. We hope that you find a world of adventure in your climbing, and that you care for the world in a way that shows your commitment to a sustainable environment for all to share.

# The State of The New

by Matt Childers

Some things never change at the New River Gorge. There is still a big bridge here, the sandstone is still bullet-hard Nuttall, and if you like to rock climb there is still no other place that offers the quality, quantity and variety of the New River Gorge. Other matters can fluctuate from year to year here in Fayetteville. Here are the highs and lows of 2008.

**👍 Thumbs up-** Sending old projects. A small but dedicated crew continues to chip away (figuratively, not literally) at the area's remaining projects. The results have yielded some classic routes in the 12+ to 13+ range. A couple of standouts were when Stephen Meinhold polished off the Genocide Cave project resulting in the stout McCray Fish and Chips (13d) and Mike Williams reequipped and sent the stunning mixed line Blood Meridian (13a) at Beauty Mountain. Watch this space in 2009; there are a couple of lines likely to go down this winter that could well breach the elusive 5.14 barrier.

**👎 Thumbs down-** November/December weather. Possibly the worst stretch of weather here in the last five years. Late fall/early winter is usually prime sending season, this year it offered numerous snowstorms and that delightful combination of 34 degrees and pouring rain. If things don't change I'm worried that some climbers might be lured down the dark path of learning how to kayak.

**👍 Thumbs up-** Mixed climbing. Be sure that I am not referring to anything involving ice axes and M-grades. Mixed climbing means routes that are a combination of bolts and gear. No question that the hidden gem of the New River Gorge is the outstanding mixed climbing. Some of the best and most engaging routes at the New collect cobwebs due to the fact that they are mixed. There is a new wave of energy in town seeking out and resurrecting these obscure classics. If you spy these first ascensionists' names in the guidebook then more than likely you are in for a treat: Eddie Begoon, Mike Artz, Andrew Barry, Kenny Parker. These names are only the tip of the iceberg; literally hundreds of high quality mixed climbs are out there to be found. No chalk? No top anchors? No worries. Do the route anyway, adventure awaits you.

**👍 Thumbs up-** Rendezvous. The Rendezvous went green this year and was a huge success. One of the premier climber events in the country the Rendezvous is three days of climbing, camaraderie and celebration. The 2008

eco-friendly Rendezvous drastically reduced waste from previous years and still raised thousands of dollars for the New River Association of Climbers. This money goes directly to help secure access and fund the massive anchor replacement effort in the gorge. The dates for 2009 are May 15, 16, and 17. Pre-registration is required, be there. For more information contact Water Stone Outdoors.

**👎 Thumbs down-** Mangler boulder tipped over. Sometime during the 2008 winter the Mangler boulder at Hawksnest fell over when they released water from the dam. This unfortunate event ruined about six classic problems. After seeing this massive chunk of rock tip over so drastically one could not help but gaze wonderingly at the future of all the other perched blocks littering that sandstone patio.

**👍 Thumbs up-** Chris Sharma. Not that the world needs more proof that Chris Sharma is good at rock climbing, but he reminded us on a local level here this year. In just a couple days he managed to onsight Proper Soul 14a, Satanic Verses 13b/c, The Racist 13b, and get one hang away from sending a project on Endless wall that he thought would be mid 5.14.

**👎 Thumbs down-** Fayetteville cops. Still lurking, still plentiful, still writing tickets. Don't speed in Fayetteville.

**👍 Thumbs up-** New Guidebook on the way. Mike Williams is currently writing a guide that should hopefully be out sometime late 2009. Expect high gloss photos and good route descriptions.

**👎 No comment-** New Endless Wall ladders. Via Ferrata anyone?

*During his undergraduate days at Appalachian State back in the '90s, Matt Childers worked with Misty Mountain and was an integral part of our local climbing crew. His nickname was Crusher; both a testimony to how hard he climbed as well as a pun at his friendly, easygoing nature. Back then one of our favorite roadtrips was to load up the truck on Friday and head up to Fayetteville, WV for a weekend of climbing at the New. It still is.*

*Matt eventually graduated from ASU and moved away from Boone. He married, and after spending a few years in Arizona and Hawaii, now lives near the New River Gorge in West Virginia where he enjoys his family, teaches school and climbs.*



**Matt Childers on The Racist, 5.13b sport, Endlesswall, NRG, WV.**  
© Michael Turner / newriverphoto.com



**Stephen Meinhold climbing New Beginnings 5.13 sport, Fern Buttress, NRG, WV.**  
© Michael Turner / newriverphoto.com



# WHAT'S NEW from Misty Mountain:

## NEW HARNESSSES

Misty has two new harnesses. The Ranger and the Photon are the first padded harnesses from Misty featuring two piece prethreaded buckles for fast, convenient adjustment and closure.

The Ranger features a unique floating swami that allows micro adjustment of the waistbelt independently of the foam swami pad. This allows climbers to customize the fit for optimum gear loop accessibility and comfort. It comes in digital camo 1000 denier nylon, features adjustable leg loops, a rear accessory loop, four gear loops and closed cell foam padding for comfort. Wt. 13.5 oz., MSRP \$89.95

The new Photon is a great lightweight harness built for sport and gym climbing. The Photon utilizes a new nano foam technology that results in a comfortable, lightweight, convenient harness for sending that project you've been working. Features include reinforced tie-in, four gear loops and elasticized fixed leg loops. Wt. 11 oz, MSRP \$84.95.



MISTY'S  
NEW RANGER  
HARNESS

**Product Improvements** Cadillac and Titan harnesses now feature offset gear loops for better organization and ease of use. New **Ranger** and **Photon** harnesses have prethreaded two piece quick adjust buckles that are convenient and safe. New digital and woodland camo patterns are showing up on Misty Mountain gear. The new **Clean Gear sling** is a simple, comfortable, full strength rack sling for free routes. **Seamless Swami belts** have been complimented with **seamless leg loops** in the **Cirque, Finesse, Arete & Primo** harnesses. Our new window pane mesh inner fabric has a higher thread count and thousands of tiny windows for cooler climbing.

**Don't Forget** Fit right, climb light. Misty Mountain offers custom harness sizing for no additional charge!

## NEW PACKS

Aside from putting up new routes in the Linville Gorge, Mike Grimm, our head designer and co-owner has also been busy finalizing the designs on three new Misty Mountain climbing packs. For years he's built crag packs for himself and a few select climbing partners. Like most Misty Mountain gear, these new crag packs are comfortable, durable and functional. Simple designs that work, like "standup bottoms" which allow you to top load the pack without it falling over. Beefy but not overbuilt suspensions systems, and built to last here in the USA. The wait is over for climbers who want a durable, comfortable, functional climbing pack. There are three models to choose from: Power, Traverse & Gorge.

The Power pack is a small volume 1020 cu. in. pack for multipitch climbing, bouldering, and just carrying your gear to the gym. It features a unique double zip/clip closure system that adds style and accessibility to the pack, along with a lowrider outer pocket for smaller items. Ergonomic padded shoulder straps, sternum strap, grab handles, comfortable back pad and an outer daisy complete the new Power Pack, MSRP \$79.95.

The Traverse pack is a full size crag sack that will carry rack, rope & gear with ease. The Traverse pack is built from durable ballistics and cordura fabrics, with a top load drawstring closure, standup bottom and full front zip for easy access. Outer daisy chains provide ample clip to points, and a sturdy inner zip pocket provides secure closure for smaller items. The padded shoulder straps and hip belt spread the load over a wide surface for carrying comfort. Full foam back provides stability and protection. Perfect for a light and fast day, traversing cliff bands and making the most of the climbing. Vol 2700 cu. in., MSRP \$179.95.

The Gorge pack is Misty Mountain's deluxe crag sack, with 3000 cu. in. capacity, a large outer pocket, separate map pocket, and a cover for handling an extra rope if needed. Dual outer daisy chains provide ample lash points, and the standup bottom and beefy #10 YKK full zip front provide max access. Thick, plush suspension provides maximum support and comfort for heavier loads. The wide, thick, tapered hipbelt transfers the load to climber's center of gravity providing optimum balance for scrambling across talus. For a long weekend exploring cliffs and possibilities, nothing can beat the new **Misty Mountain Gorge Pack**. MSRP \$249.95



Easy Load Opening



Secure Drawstring Closure



Deployable Inclment Weather Hood

## ADJUSTABLE HARNESS PADS

New harness pads are available from Misty Mountain. A set consists of a 29" waist pad and two 14" leg pads. The pads have an outer layer of 1000 denier nylon for durability, 1/4" closed cell foam, polyknit mesh inner, and utilize hook & loop tabs to affix to the harness. The pads go on easily, are secure, allow adjustment, and provide a more comfortable hang. Designed specifically for our program harnesses, the pad really makes a program harness deluxe. MSRP: \$24.95/set.

## NEW ANCHOR CHAIN AND SLINGS

Misty's new Anchor Chain works well as a personal tether for climber to the anchor system. The 42" length chain consists of 6 individual loops of 9/16" nylon supertape in a chain, each link as strong as the overall system (22kN). Also available are new 6" dogbones for sport draws, and new 1" Bluewater Climbspec runners in 2', 4' & 6' lengths, a great choice for strong, durable top-roping anchors.

# Seneca Short

by Goose Kearse

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Anyway, after finally getting my sphincter unclenched enough to leave the security of the excellent jam and move from beneath the roof, I found a plethora of holds awaited. Moving upward, I didn't see much gear between ACK and I. Hmm.

Having gained the upper tier of rock, we traversed the vegetated Broadway ledge to another classic, Soler, named for the first ascensionist Tony Soler. First climbed in 1951 long before sticky rubber, this route throws the kitchen sink at you with a variety of climbing in its short two pitches. Soler was everything you could hope for, with weird chicken winging, an exposed belay, plenty of tricky protection (Sorry about that pink tri-cam, ACK.) and tons of classic steep Seneca sandstone and slippery quartzite. I couldn't believe the view topping out the second pitch, on the very top of the fin. You could see in all directions, the valleys converging and then spanning outward like spokes from a hub. We put on jackets to protect from the wind's chill, and enjoyed the view and exposure along with some food and water before taking the two rappels back to the ground.

Later that night I joined ACK and Diane, his wife and cohort in guiding, and four of their young guides for dinner. The night was the traditional Fall going away party, as the young men were moving on to other places for the remainder of the winter. Travis was heading to guide in Red Rocks, Alan back to Mountain Trails in nearby Winchester, Virginia, Matthew and Massey to New England for ice climbing and telemark skiing before visiting families during the holidays. ACK and Diane put on the feedbag, tossing steaks on the grill and making mounds of scalloped potatoes and succotash, and brownies for dessert. The meal was wonderful, it's savor matched only by the company. After enjoying the warmth and glow of the woodstove, one by one the guides bid their friends goodbye, making their way into the starry West Virginia night. Three of them pledged to return for the Spring, and I made the same vow in silence. Although this was my first trip to Seneca, it wouldn't be my last.

Seneca Rocks is a great adventure climbing area, but like all cliffs carries dangers of rockfall, old pitons, venomous serpents, weather hazards and all the other various risks associated with climbing. The grades are stiff at Seneca, routes are steep, and protection is sometimes tricky and run out, but the view from the top can't be beat. If you're going, make sure to have a comfortable harness for the hanging belays, and a small backpack to carry a windshell, water & snacks for the top. At Seneca, the guides choose the Misty Mountain Cadillac as their harness. Its outstanding comfort, adjustability and extra gear loops are what you'll appreciate at this traditional stronghold. Misty Mountain gear is available from the well stocked climbing shop at The Gendarme. For an outstanding guided experience I highly recommend the Seneca Rocks Climbing School at The Gendarme, just behind Harper's General Store, or the folks across the street at Tom Cecil's Seneca Rocks Mountain Guides. Both have long histories of guiding in this remote climber's paradise.

## NEW BANNERS

Styling new Gold & Black Misty Mountain banners are now in stock. Let us know if you'd like a new banner when placing your next order.



**MISTY MOUNTAIN THREADWORKS**

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B A N N E R E L K , N C 2 8 6 0 4

# Carolina Climbers Coalition Report

by President Anthony Love

Happy New Year! The CCC is working on a number of projects and is finalizing others. The Laurel Knob Project is days away from being finished. All the money has been raised to repay the loans. We are just awaiting the final word from the Lawyers office before making the final announcement. One project we are working on actively is completing a new kiosk for the folks at Crowders Mtn. State Park. They plan on opening up the Dixon School Road area to bouldering and we are assisting in this with the Kiosk. We are still working with the management of Chimney Rock State Park with regards to climbing access in other areas of the gorge (in addition to Rumbling Bald Mountain). We continue to work in collaboration with the Boone Climbers Coalition and the Blue Ridge Parkway in their ongoing efforts to help manage climbing on the parkway. We are also negotiating a new lease with the landowner of Asheboro to hopefully extend the term of our leasing period there. We have been negotiating with the folks at Camp Hanes who own Sauratown Mountain to arrange climbing access for the cliffs since the fire that closed the area last spring.

*The Carolina Climbers Coalition is one of the best regional climbing organizations in our country. The superior leadership that characterized the CCC under Sean Coburn's tenure has resurged under the guidance of current president Anthony Love. The CCC has funded climbing areas, promoted stewardship, provided a legitimate voice for the climbing community with resource managers, and pretty much done everything (short of limiting gravitational forces) to enhance the climbing experience of folks in the Carolinas. Visit [carolinaclimbers.org](http://carolinaclimbers.org) to join.*