

Sun Runner & Hyside Whitewater Inflatables

By Herm Hoops ~ 2015

Hyside Inflatables are the culmination of Richard “Dick” DeChant’s life experience and all of the components that make a well-designed whitewater raft. Richard began his river running experience in a raft he purchased at Sunset Sports and launched on a swollen Salt River in 1979 while he was enrolled in Arizona State University. He quickly recognized there was a need for a higher quality whitewater raft.

While in college he began working part-time for Holubar Mountaineering a Tempe, Arizona store that made high quality camping equipment. The store began selling kayak and rafting equipment and Richard learned to kayak in a swimming pool.(2,6) Shortly after, he was invited on a Grand Canyon trip, where he was told he may need to help row a boat. “As I recall,” says DeChant, “we made one trip up to the upper Salt River for a lesson with Jerry Van Gasse, a ‘read it as you go’ type guy. After being handed the oars in the middle of a few rapids I was told I was ready for the Grand Canyon.” The Grand Canyon launch was in two weeks and DeChant hiked down to meet the group at Phantom Ranch and rowed the lower part of the Canyon.(2,6)

After finishing at Arizona State, Holubar offered DeChant a job at their Glendale, California operation. Holubar had purchased the Kelty Company and Richard was helping buy inflatable boats for the chain so he moved there and started a new boating department. Meanwhile Campways, based in Los Angeles, also saw the opportunity to market rafts. When North Face purchased Holubar corporate changes began and in a short time John Mills the Campways Sales Manager offered DeChant a job and he accepted.(2,10)

While at Campways, DeChant bought life jackets and other seconds and in 1982 he started Sun Runner, a commercial rafting operation on the Salt River. Tom Schlinkert was the East coast representative for Campways and Dan Baxter marketed them in the Northwest. Having the background at Holubar, a high end outdoor equipment outlet, Campways likely saw Dick as new experience in the development and sales of their main stream equipment line. In addition they had someone interested in the newly emerging boating department. Although hired for sales, he jumped at the chance to gain experience in adjusting the quality control issues the company had and working with the manufacturer to correct them, volunteered to work in accounting to look for errors in the billing department and worked with the ad agency. When Baxter became the sole Northwest Campways Distributer, Dick was put in charge of handling Baxter’s account and some other international accounts.(2,10,11) Campways gave DeChant the opportunity to move from retail sales to gaining insight into how the manufacturing end worked.

{Numbers in parenthesis (1) are REFERENCES; letters in parenthesis (#a) are described in SIGNIFICANT NOTES.}

While at Campways Richard met one of his mentors, Curt Wyatt, the owner of Acme Mattress. Acme, a family operation that began business in the 1920s, was headquartered in Long Beach, California. If Campways needed massive repairs for tents or backpacks made overseas they were sent to Acme Mattress. The Acme seamstresses would fix the errors, but they were also adept at making prototypes. Over time Wyatt asked Richard to start Innovations Import Inc., an Acme business that imported medical supplies. Wyatt was working with Baxter Medical, a big medical distributor and at that time he was making commercial mattresses for jails and hospitals along with multiple retail outlets.(2) Acme was also selling mattresses to Japan at the time and had no experience in importing. Through Campways DeChant had built some contacts in Korea along with importing knowledge, so he agreed to team up with Wyatt.(2,6,10)

Around age 25 Richard went to Seoul, South Korea looking for medical supplies to import. He attended KOTRA, a trade show that represented just about everything made in Korea. He remembers: “That visit was a bonanza because I found not only manufacturers for the medical products but an inflatable boat manufacturer that made sport boats, life rafts and military pontoons by the name of Chin Yang Riken (CYR).”(2)

Richard didn't speak Korean, but he was lucky enough to hook up with one of the top companies in Korea (a family run conglomerate that Korea's growth was founded on) where all of the salesmen all spoke fluent English. He was also in contact with Sunkyung (SK Group) who at the time had 35 branches around the world. “If you needed something, chances are they could find it, quote it and deliver it, which was invaluable in finding products for customers.”(2,10)

In SK the Los Angeles office DeChant would develop leads for products they deemed an important growth item in the United States. In one situation he helped with the export of cattle from the United States to Korea, using cargo planes. Richard remembers: “We were air freighting cattle to Korea from Missouri. They were renting private jets, like Fed Ex because that was Korea's thing - they liked beef and they didn't have it.” At the same time at ACME Mattress, DeChant was ensconced in small storefront section of the ACME complex that covered half a city block in Long Beach, California. Needing to form a corporation, the partners picked the name Import Innovation Inc. (“Three eyes for you”). The first product imported from DeChant's Korean visit was silk pillow covers for hospital use. Soon after they sourced out a supplier to build small hand surfboards for body surfing, called “Hand Guns,” for a company called Body Glove. It didn't take long to realize submitting paperwork to U.S. Customs created a huge roadblock. Dick says: “I quickly realized how important it was to review the product description prior to submitting entry documents to U S Customs. The invoices simply said “Hand Guns.” I had that molded and built for them. That was one of the toughest things I ever had was importing a ‘handgun!’”(2,10)

There was plenty of action between the busy street and the day-to-day ACME goings on. Besides the hundreds of mattresses shuttling back and forth, seamstresses next door were re-covering furniture. “One of our earlier projects was building a truck bed tent that the ladies helped me knock out in a matter of days. In another location, jail cell mattresses were made with neoprene covers. The suppliers of this material turned out to be a great contact to learn the ins and outs of rubberized materials for inflatable use.”(2)

Over time, DeChant made several trips to Europe and Asia to visit various rubber-related manufacturers (including Metzler and Toyo) to study materials and procedures. In addition to learning the various “tricks” that individual manufacturers developed, he became aware that following the International Standards Organization (ISO9000) would be very helpful in maintaining quality control.(6)

In a coincidence U-Haul had gone to Richard because he operated Sun Runner in Arizona and that’s where U-Haul’s headquarters was. U-Haul had decided they were going to rent sporting goods equipment and they asked Richard where he bought his rafts. He went to their headquarters in downtown Phoenix and ended up meeting the founder of U-Haul. At that point U-Haul had eleven hundred outlets in the United States and DeChant was looking for trailer hitches, volleyball sets, bicycles, and almost any recreational equipment for them at the same time he was acting as the SK Group agent as a products and import consultant in Los Angeles. He met with the Big Five Sporting Goods chain for importing tennis shoes, golf gloves, boats and other products. “It was an experience for me at that age!” “I was doing all these things to fund my addiction to rafting. Had I stuck with any of those things I think I would have been out of rafting, except for an occasional recreational raft trip.”(2)

SUN RUNNER INFLATABLES

By 1982 DeChant knew what ingredients were needed to make a quality product and Sun Runner inflatables had begun manufacture at Chin Yang Riken (CYR) in Korea. DeChant came up with the name Sun Runner Outfitting and Sun Runner boats by combining the Arizona Sun and river running: Sun Runner. A year after introducing the line CYR was purchased by Samgong (SG), a Korean manufacturer who only wanted to manufacture military products. Samgong a privately held company, founded in 1950, specialized in military inflatables of all types along with life rafts and rubber gas masks. Samgong planned to use CYR to increase their capacity and refused to continue building Sun Runner boats. At that point DeChant went to the Formosan Rubber Group (FRG) in Taiwan because he had customers and needed supply. Although he felt Korea had the best rotocuring equipment and made the best fabrics, he went to Taiwan to supply his customer base. Though he knew the product wouldn’t be perfect, it would be good.(2,9) DeChant had worked for five years at Formosan Rubber Group (FRG) with Sun Runner design and production.

Sunset Sports, where DeChant bought his first raft, was owned by Dick McGillis who distributed Udisco Rafts.(11)(#b.) Dick’s son, Mark McGillis along with Dan Baxter and Tom Schlinkert were using the Formosan Rubber Group for manufacture of Campways products. While DeChant was developing Sun Runner in Taiwan, Mark McGillis was trying to talk Formosan Rubber into giving him the exclusive production of inflatables for the U.S. market.(11,)

The Taiwan Sun Runner rafts, manufactured in Taiwan, came in a variety of fabric colors, were non-self bailing, came with full wrap floors, two thwarts with removable rear thwart, motor mount attachments, D-rings, rubstrake, anti-chafing strips and military BS valves.

The heavy duty rafts (HD) came with Neotuff 80% Hypalon tube and neoprene floors. The regular series (RS) had ROTO/EPDM tube material and Neotuff floors.(2,3,4) These Sun Runner models had a three year limited warranty:

<u>Length</u>	<u>Width</u>	<u>Tube</u>	<u>Cost</u>	<u>Material</u>
10'RS		15"	\$640	EPDM
12'RS		18"	\$790	EPDM
14'RS		20"	\$940	EPDM
14'HD		20"	\$1240	1050 denier floor/850 denier tube
15'RS		21"	\$1150	EPDM
15'HD		21"	\$1540	1050 denier floor/850 denier tube
15'PONT.			\$350	1050 denier/850 denier tube Neotuff (Hypalon)

Five years would pass before DeChant and his good friend C.W. Park, who he had met at Sunkyung's Seoul headquarters, could convince Samgong to build their line of inflatables. In those five years, Samgong had acquired the world's latest equipment to produce Hypalon and neoprene coated fabric for inflatables. By this time it became very obvious that they were producing the toughest fabric available and in 1987 Samgong agreed to work with him.(6,10) "When I was working with Formosan Rubber Group there was always pressure: Mark McGillis was offering to buy twice as many boats if they would stop selling to Sun Runner. So I said ok, tell McGillis to buy twice as much because I was ready to walk out the door." "Offering to purchase twice as much and requesting a much lower price does not always get you the same quality. That lot may have had some ground up tires in the Hypalon, a risk you take when you demand lower prices.(10) In the meantime Campways had gone bankrupt. "In many ways," says DeChant, "the timing was right to relinquish the FRG contract and put my efforts into Samgong in Korea."(2)(#q.)

In 1985 the U.S. Department of Treasury sent a shudder through the inflatable manufacturers by declaring that the Jones Act prohibited the use of foreign built inflatable rafts from carrying passengers on navigable waters within the United States. The Western River Guides Association, outfitters and Dan Baxter petitioned Congress to remove river running equipment from the Jones Act.(5)(#j.)(#k.)

The plant in Korea had installed the newest fabric coating machinery. The fabric used on the boats was now 1000 denier polyester base fabric with an 80% Hypalon coating which had increased tensile strength, air retention, abrasion and weather resistance. By 1987 the Sun Runner line had more models, including self bailing lines with inflatable floors and they came with a five year warranty.

RECREATIONAL SERIES (SB = Self-Bailing Boat)

<u>Style</u>	<u>Length</u>	<u>Width</u>	<u>Tube Diameter</u>	<u>Weight</u>
114HSB	9'6"	3'2"	12"	35
120H	10'	5'	15"	72
130H	11'	5'6"	16"	80
130S	11'	5'6"	16"	56
132HSB	11'8"	3'8"	14"	40
144H	12'	5'10"	17"	92
152S	12'8"	6'3"	18'6"	85
156H	13'	6'4"	19"	100
156HSB	13'	6'4"	19"	128
166H	14'	6'10"	20"	105
166HSB	14'	6'10"	20"	139
196H	15'8"	7'6"	21"	146
196HSB	15'8"	7'6"	21"	172

DeChant had been living on a sailboat in the Long Beach Harbor for five years. The Kern River, 180 miles northeast, offered the closest whitewater that's where Sun Runner did most of its testing. During one trip in early December, with snow blanketing the Kern's banks, DeChant visited a fledgling outfitter, seeking a partner to paddle the tandem kayak he had hoped to test. The co-owner of what is now Sierra South Mountain Sports volunteered his sister Marianne, who reluctantly accompanied DeChant on that frigid day. It was a successful trip in many ways, as he moved the office to Kernville and married Marianne.(2,6)

Oddly enough a yacht manufacturer in Seattle appeared about that time with a claim that they possessed copyright to the name Sun Runner. "When we were Sun Runner we were sued by Sun Runner Yachts. It came down to who advertised first. When it was Sun Runner Rafting, it was two years before I paid for my first advertisement so our case was shaky. Before that we were going to schools and churches, and to hotels and giving commissions to bellmen to get people to go on river trips. So we had to drop the name Sun Runner.(2) With a new direction, choosing a new name became a top priority and friends and family far and near were asked to brainstorm a new name.(6)

HYSIDE

Sun Runner's new name was born on the Kern: two local paddlers, Rick and Katharine Haines, tossed the name "Highside" out to DeChant and he ran with the idea, given that many safety talks include instructions to high side when a boat goes upon an obstacle. In 1988 he modified the spelling to Hyside, manufactured by Samgong in Korea. Hyside is a sole proprietorship enterprise. The corporation registered name is Import Innovations, Inc. doing business as Hyside.(2,10)

In Korea the conflict with North Korea was very evident, especially near the factory compound because it made military product (gas masks, boats, pontoon bridges etc.). In the early years DeChant needed military clearance and cameras were not allowed within a mile of the facilities. It took five years to convince the owner of the factory to accept our business because they had little interest in non-military products. "Only after I took full responsibility for overseeing the development stages did they agree." To date, DeChant has made 159 trips to Korea for this reason.(2,6)(#c.)

"I sensed in early meetings with Samgong's upper management that 'whitewater' was not in the comfort zone of this family-owned business," says DeChant. "Korea had never experienced 'whitewater anything,' so convincing the family that this was a viable product was an uphill battle. Little did I know that squeezing our needs into their structured ways would take as long as it did." The Korean military, Samgong's biggest customer, usually worked on a year-to-year budget and then wanted immediate delivery. Hyside, on the other hand, was a seasonal business whose customers were used to ordering as needed and selecting from 60 different designs and eight color choices. These irregular patterns were difficult to address when producing handmade products. As the years went by, Hyside was given more production time and their own production staff, no longer sharing time with staff that made military products.(2,6)

Working with foreign manufacturers is demanding because of language, cultural differences, workforce turn over and many other aspects of the manufacturing process. "What was difficult, is that Samgong is a military company and the management there said you're responsible for the product, we're going to work with you but you have to make sure nothing goes wrong. If it does, don't point the finger at us if something goes wrong."(2) "Initially they said we'll give you one month of production time and we'll see how it works out, over time I got a year's worth of boats built in a year's production.(2) Around one hundred boats were manufactured on the first run. "They could knock them out fast. I got the whole production staff, at one time and there were a hundred people working on them. Once I started to prove that I could sell the product they peeled off 25 people and said that these are yours. You can use them year-round. What was difficult is that as we had more capacity I had to know what customers were anticipating to keep the production going year round."(2)

Hyside and the Samgong production department had a competition in a sense to see who could develop the best improvements. Samgong would implement the suggestions Hyside made over the course of the year and then they'd surprise Hyside with advancements the production team had made but never told Hyside about. The owner, the founder's son, Korn Lee was very adamant that all developments needed to come from within. Often DeChant would need to feign that an idea came from the factory side in order to get full support. "My vote for the all-time best innovation would be the urethane adhesion that we did in the States. Prior to that, there wasn't a primer that would adhere urethane to rubber. We credit Alan Taylor of Pacific Elastomer with developing it for us."(6)(#m.)

Luckily Hyside's production allotment developed at nearly the same pace as their demand. What started as a "knock on doors" sales effort, turned into a "these things last forever, why switch" reputation. In addition to the conventional sales methods, Hyside also attended regional (Colorado Outfitters Association) and national trade shows (America Outdoors), where they displayed their boats. One of the most productive was the Western River Guides trade show, where the majority of the attendees were guides that worked at the river companies. This gave Hyside the opportunity to offer hands-on clinics on boat anatomy and maintenance with the end users.(6)(#k.)

DeChant knew about design and quality of whitewater boats from running rivers and working for Campways. He had the rafting company and for thirteen years owned a river launch site and worked closely with a raft repair center at Chili Bar on the American River to give him the pulse of what was going on.(#g.) Dick knows the business of what works in raft construction by operating Hyside, his wife owning Sierra South Rafting, and Chili Bar.(2) Hyside sells about 600 boats a year in recent times but before the economic downturn they were approaching around 1,200 boats annually.(2)

"Part of our limitation is that we can only build so many hand-made boats. Handcrafted boats are high quality products, but the price of handcrafting is the time it takes to build them. When the next production is about to start we stay in close contact with Samgong. Recreational raft manufacturing is a little different industry because depending on anticipated river flows, we may have to have big boats at the beginning of a season and as time goes on we move to produce smaller boats. We don't sell any kayaks early in the season, but as soon as summer hits and the water drops people want kayaks. We try to forecast, the best we can, by looking at previous sales, colors, etc. The factory would like to make one style, one color, so we have to order in quantities. In this business Hyside's success is in designing boats to a user's specific needs. It is not a one-size fits all business and you have to closely follow trends."(10) The economy, weather, permit systems, and the competition with a multitude of other outdoor recreational activities that seem to attract younger people are some of the challenges that companies must overcome.(10)(#h.)

Hyside manufactures boats at the same plant that makes their fabric. The boats conform to Military Specifications and uses the same fabric as Korean military pontoons using 80/20 Hypalon coating for wear and UV resistance. Hyside now applies a urethane coating, similar to that used in truck bed liners, on the bottom chafer.(6)(#m.) Hyside inflatables are manufactured using double denier construction, triple bond joints, inside seam tape, overlapped fabric and outside seam tape.(1,2) The boats come with a repair kit and extra d-rings. Initially Hyside used a military valve but for a decade have used the Leaffield type valves.(#l)(#p.)

1992 HYSIDE MODELS & SPECIFICATIONS (H = Standard Floor)(@ = Padillac IK (#I.))

<u>Model</u>	<u>LengthWidth</u>		<u>Tube Diameter</u>	<u>Chambers</u>	<u>Self Bailing</u>	<u>Fabric: Denier Tube/Floor</u>		
130H				11'5"	5'7"	16.5"	4	No
						420/1050		
144	11'10"	6'1"	19"	6	Yes	840/1050		
156	12'10"	6'10"	19.5"	6	Yes	840/1050		
166	14'3"	6'10"	22"	6	Yes	840/1050		
196	15'10"	7'6"	22"	6	Yes	840/1050		
156CAT	13'	NA	24"	2	NA	1050		
180CAT	15'	NA	18"	2	NA	1050		
196CAT	16'	NA	24"	2	NA	1050		
IK1@	9'6"	3'3"	12.5"	4	No	420/1050		
IK2@	11'9"	3'4"	13"	5	No	420/1050		

By 2000 Hyside developed a Commercial, Big Boat, Livery and a new "2000" Series of boats. The boats came with standard or self-bailing I-beam floors, although by then the self-bailing market had overwhelmed the old "bucket-boat" style. The self-bailing floors have seam tape inside the attachment which uses grommets on floor and webbing to attach the floor to the tubes. As with previous models the boats came with a bottom chafe strip and side rubstrake. Over time the dimensions of the boats were adjusted. The "Commercial Series" (HSB) models were shorter than 15' and the "Big Boat" (HSB) Series models were over 16' long. The "Livery" (L) Series were non-self bailing and shorter than 14' and used 840 denier fabric. In addition a new 2000 Series is shorter than 14', self-bailing, gray in color and used the 840 denier fabric. The boats introduced a new thwart attachment system.

The 2000 Cataraft Series used a heavier 1260 denier fabric and added urethane chafers to reduce abrasion resistance. The Padillac Inflatable Kayak Series had 840 denier tubes and 1260 denier floors that were wrapped over the tubes for additional wear protection. The single piece construction of the tubes reduced "tacoing" at the joints from impacts. In addition Hyside introduced the Padillac Extreme that had foot braces and thigh straps.

Storage of first aid kits, repair equipment, throw bags and other gear had always been a problem with paddleboats. In 2005 Hyside introduced a water-tight, zippered thwart that allowed storage of equipment in the easily accessible thwart whose seams have three overlays to assure air retention.

In 2015 Hyside produced the Outfitter Series, Pro Series, as well as continuing the non-self-bailing Livery Series. They marketed the Padillac Series, CatarafTs and introduced the Mini Me and Mini Max Series, and also offered a Neo line of models constructed with neoprene that have urethane bottom chafers.

2015 HYSIDE MODELS & SPECIFICATIONS (Livery = Standard Floor)(@ = Padillac IK (#I.))

<u>Model</u>	<u>Length</u>	<u>Width</u>	<u>Tube Diameter</u>	<u>Chambers</u>	<u>Fabric: Denier</u>	<u>Weight</u>
Mini Me	9'0"	5'0"	18"	4	1680	52#
Mini Max	10'6"	5'0"	18"	5	1680	67#
Outfitter 12.0	11'10"	6'1"	19"	7	1680	87#
Outfitter 12.5HDB	12'7"	5'	18"	8	1680	101#
Outfitter 13.0	13'	6'	18"	8	1680	104#
Outfitter 14.0	13'10"	6'6"	19"	8	1680	119#
Outfitter 14.0XT	14'0"	7'	21"	8	1680	130#
Pro 13.0	12'11"	6'2"	19"	8	2520	104#
Pro 13.5	13'7"	6'4"	20"	8	2520	113#
Pro 14.0	14'3"	6'10"	21"	8	2520	130#
Pro 14.8	14'9"	6'4"	20"	9	2520	128#
Pro 15.0	15'	7'0"	21"	5	2520	119#
Pro 16.0	15'10"	6'10"	21"	9	2520	135#
Pro 16.0XT	15'10"	7'8"	22"	7	2520	138#
Pro 18.0	18'	7'8"	22"	5	2520	139#
Pro 18.0XT	18'	8'6"	24"	5	2520	154#
Pro 20.0	20'	8'6"	24"	5	2520	184#
Livery 9.0	9'	5'	18"	3	1680	42#
Livery 10.0	10'	5'	16"	4	1680	52#
Livery 11.0	11'3"	5'6"	16"	4	1680	62#
Livery 11.5	11'6"	5'10"	18"	4	1680	72#
Livery 13.0	13'	5'10"	18"	4	1680	77#
Livery 14.0	13'10"	6'6"	19.5"	6	1680	92#

In addition the Padillac I and II, Cataracts and Paddlecat Models were manufactured. Hyside does make variations depending upon customer requests and quantity built. Hyside recommends using Sta Bond UK148 for boat repair. The company markets a full line of accessories, safety equipment, paddles, valves and repair equipment. Their warranty for workmanship, fabric, seams and airtightness is five years and parts and accessories for one year. The company maintains a listing of distributors and authorized repair centers. DeChant sells Hyside boats in Colombia, Chile, Peru, India, Costa Rica, Canada and the United States.(#a.)

In the ensuing years since that first trip on the Salt River in 1979, DeChant has experienced many changes in river management, raft design and production, marketing and other challenges the industry has faced. Given his quest for quality and innovation the Hyside boats continue to run rivers around North America and the World in large numbers. In 1979 DeChant recognized the need for a better raft..... and he continues to design and build them.

REFERENCES

- (1) Hyside web site: <http://www.hyside.com>
- (2) Richard DeChant, Oral Interview with Herm Hoops, Kernville, CA; January 23, 2013;*
- (3) 1985 Sun Runner Idaho Outdoor Supply Catalog, H Hoops Collection;*
- (4) 1984 Sun Runner, Dave's River and Mountain Supply Advertisement, River Runner Magazine, H Hoops Collection;*
- (5) Letter from Bob Volpert, President; Western River Guides Association, Inc.; November 1, 1985; To: Importers of Foreign Boats;
- (6) Richard DeChant's Background by Ann Beman; January 2015;
- (7) Email from Dennis (D9er) Schell to Herm Hoops; March 1, 2015;
- (8) Email from Richard DeChant to Herm Hoops; March 9, 2015;
- (9) Series of Emails Richard DeChant to Herm Hoops; March 9, 2015;
- (10) Richard DeChant corrections to Herm Hoops; March 23, 2015;
- (11) History of Campways & Riken - University of Utah, J. Willard Marriott Library, Special River Archive, Herm Hoops Collection;

MISCELLANEOUS

- Hyside Hull Code: HYF
- Sun Runner Hull Code: NBR, SNBR, & FRB
- Hyside Inflatables: 12100 Sierra Way, Kernville, CA 93238; (800) 868-5987; hyside.com

DEALERS (2015):

- Down River Equipment Company; 12100 W 52nd Ave, Wheat Ridge, CO 80033; (303) 467-9489
- Sierra South; P.O. Box 1909, 11300 Kernville Road, Kernville, CA 93238; Store: (760) 376-3745
- Riverboat Works; 202 Oak St, Salida, CO 81201; (719) 539-9323
- Pacific River Supply; 3675 San Pablo Dam Rd, El Sobrante, CA 94803; (510) 223-3675

MANUFACTURERS:

- Samgong Industrial Co., Ltd.: 532, Sinpyeong-dong, Saha-gu, Busan 604-836 Korea
- Sunkyung Group: Changed name in 1997 to SK Group; 113 offices worldwide

SIGNIFICANT NOTES:

(#a.) Big Customers

Some of the early Sun Runner/Hyside Dealers were: G I Joes, Larry's Sports Center, Black Birds, Dave Cooks, Cascade Outfitters, Four Corners Riversports, River Raiders, Montbel (Japan), Boise Army Navy and Down River Equipment. Besides many smaller outfitters from around the North America and the World Hyside has a number of outfitters who purchase large orders. One of Hyside's routine customers is Buettner's Wild Wolf running the Wolf River in Wisconsin. Every year, like clockwork they order thirty boats and they have 400 boats stored inflated in their barn. Colorado and the Arkansas river outfitters are other major purchasers of Hyside working through Down River Equipment in Wheat Ridge, CO.(2)(#f.) Another large quantity of Hyside boats are used by the Nantahala Outdoor Center (NOC) in North Carolina. Others include ACE Whitewater in WV, Bass River Resort in MO; Charlie Sands in WY; Rockin River Rides in TX; Sierra South, Whitewater Excitement and American Whitewater Expeditions (Libra) in California; River Runners (Adrift) in CO & UT and Scenic River Tours in CO; University of Calgary in Canada and Exploradores Outdoors in Costa Rica.

(#b.) The Union Distributing Company*

(Udisco), a division of Malone & Hyde, Inc., imported and wholesaled a plethora of items from golf, baseball and dance equipment to camping gear. Malone & Hyde was a very large wholesaler whose principal owner was Dick McGillis. Dick McGillis business after WWII as a surplus distributor. The Union Distributing Company was originally set up to service the expanding Sunset Sporting Goods stores also owned by Dick McGillis who was a partner in Campways. Sunset Sporting Goods had more than 20 stores in the Western United States. Udisco closed its production on March 5th of 1987. The Union Distributing Company probably discontinued when Sunset sold out to Herman's or Big Five Sporting Goods National Chain stores.(9,19)

McGillis was the money behind Harold Horne and the start-up of Campways, a take-off on the Camp Trails name. Dick's son Mark McGillis was owner of Pro Advantage, which was a distributor of Riken. For additional information see History of Udisco Rafts* 2013 and Campways and Riken History*

(#c.) Foreign Quality Control

Dealing with foreign manufacturing requires cultural and historical knowledge. The Japanese will quote a right price for the product, and the Taiwanese are used to bartering with the U.S. from many years of manufacturing items built in Taiwan. But DeChant went to Korea at a time when there weren't a lot of U.S. products being made in Korea. That's why Richard has been to Korea over 159 times (as of 01/2013). He learned that he couldn't rely on an agent or representative to oversee others building products or for quality control. "I had to go there and I had to know when they were making certain phases. We monitored production to find that there were seven phases of production and if something went wrong we knew at what phase it occurred and how to correct it. I always told the factory when something goes wrong I want to explain to the customer what went wrong and why and how we're going to make sure it doesn't go wrong again, so they'll believe in us. It helps perpetuate quality and it gave the factory something to follow."

Most Asian manufacturers aren't overly concerned about patent infringement. "They don't openly discuss that and you don't even know if they looked at the patent. And they don't want to be under your insurance umbrella they want you to take responsibility for any errors or problems. The biggest difficulty with my factory was that the chairman of the company was the founder's son, he was getting up on age and in the Korean culture you don't accept something unless it was your idea. I brought some young staff Koreans to the U.S. and tried to explain product development to them. Then four months later I fly back over and say: what's the progress. And they say: "Well we didn't do anything because it has to be coming from my bosses."(2)

(#d) Formosan Rubber Group Inc. (FRG) & EPDM

FRG was founded in Taiwan in 1952 and is currently the largest Asian rubber and leather manufacturer. They make the following fabrics used in inflatable boat construction: PVC/Polyester, PVC/Nylon, Hytex® (an inflatable boat material competitive with Pennel Rubber), EPDM based material. EPDM rubber (ethylene propylene diene monomer (M-class) rubber), is a type of synthetic rubber closely related to ethylene propylene rubber. It has excellent abrasion resistance, and excellent ozone, chemical, bacterial and ageing resistance. It can withstand temperatures from -40 Deg C to + 90 Deg C. EPDM is mainly used in the automotive industry, for roofing. The Formosan Rubber Group Inc. is principally engaged in project construction, as well as the production and distribution of rubber products. In 2011 they had an annual revenue of \$124 million dollars, 215 employees and 20 research and development engineers. The company owns 61 patents with another 67 pending. In addition to the many items they manufacture, they produce Botex (TM), PVC/Polyester and PVC/Nylon inflatable boats. They manufacture inflatable craft and pontoons for the Taiwanese Military.

(#e.) Auto-Matrix

Over the past 30 years American Auto-Matrix has grown to be a worldwide influence in the HVAC community with a network of Solution Integrators that spans the globe. Manufacturing a complete family of microprocessor-based, applied, networkable controllers, used in a broad range of applications, AAM was the first to offer open architecture, generation-to-generation compatibility, DDC, and object-oriented programming. From inception, the company had the vision to allow generation after generation of controllers to be compatible with each other, keeping ease of transition and future upgrades in mind. In December of 2002, American Auto-Matrix was purchased by Jordan Acquisition Group, LLC, a group of private U.S. Investors. Since then, they have grown their product base substantially.

(#f.) Down River Equipment

When Dennis Schell (D-9er) and Greg Yeager started Down River in Wheat Ridge, Colorado in 1985, DeChant worked closely with them. Yeager and Schell sold Down River and the outfitter Adrift in 1998 and now it is an employee (boater) owned company. Greg is an innovator and he didn't want to really get out of the river business. He bought an army generator that wasn't working, fixed it, bought an abandoned saw mill and fixed it, cut his own trees and built his house. Today DeChant continues working with Greg Yeager on new product development. D-9er operates a raft repair (A H Sports) business in Arboles, Colorado near Navajo Reservoir. Dennis' wife Jean does sewing and making river gear under the name Stitches'n Stuff. (<http://www.stitchesnstuff91.com>) (POB 1843, Arboles, CO 81121)

(#g.) Chili Bar

Chili Bar was a very busy put-in on the South Fork of the American River. Thirty five outfitters and many privates used the Chili Bar access. DeChant had a repair center and a frame manufacturing place at Chili Bar. Annual repair clinics were held there. DeChant sold the Chili Bar operation in 2010. DeChant credits much of his company's quality control to Jason Mellor who owned Rapid Repair, a raft repair center that worked closely with Hyside and spearheaded much of the testing, quality control oversight and outfitter maintenance instruction clinics.(8,10)

(#h.) Effects on Sales

The limited use of the rivers combined with many new companies producing less expensive boats has been a factor in shrinking sales. Getting on many rivers easily drove many people because you could go almost anywhere and get on a river, there were few use limitations and now it is expensive, and complex permits discourage many people. It seems that fewer young people are coming into "rafting," perhaps related to the plethora of other new outdoor sports and new types of river travel (paddleboards). All equipment is becoming more expensive, and the challenge is to educate customers that if you buy good quality it lasts for a long time.

(#i.) The Padillac

DeChant named his first inflatable kayak the "Padillac." It was almost a financial disaster because Hyside was sued by General Motors, who had a very big law firm, because of the term "Padillac." General Motors claimed the name was an infringement on the Cadillac. Richard went to his attorneys, and they said - "You'll probably win because you had the name first, but the cost of the lawsuit was going to be prohibitive.(2) However, as of 2015 the Padillac IK is still sold by Hyside.

(#j.) The Jones Act

The Merchant Marine Act of 1920 (P.L. 66-261), also known as the Jones Act, is a federal statute that provides for the promotion of American made American Merchant Marine products. Among other purposes, the law regulates maritime commerce in U.S. navigable waters and U.S. ports. Section 27 of the Jones Act, deals with cabotage (i.e., coastal shipping) and requires that all goods transported by water between U.S. ports be carried on U.S. flag ships, constructed in the United States, owned by U.S. citizens, and crewed by U.S. citizens and U.S. permanent residents. The Act was introduced by Senator Wesley Jones (R-WA). Wing Inflatables used the Jones Act to restrict sales of foreign-made inflatables to the U.S. Military. See "The History of Wing Inflatables"*

Laws similar to the Jones Act date to the early days of the nation. In the First Congress, on September 1, 1789, Congress enacted Chapter XI, An Act for Registering and Clearing Vessels, Regulating the Coasting Trade, and for other purposes," which limited domestic trades to American ships meeting certain requirements. The Merchant Marine Act of 1920 has been revised a number of times, the most recent revision in 2006 included recodification in the U.S. Code.

(#k.) Western River Guides Association (Edited from UTAH.com, by Richard Quist)

In the winter of 1954, a small group of part time, some time and "wanna be full time" Utah outfitters gathered in Salt Lake City and formed the Western River Guides Association. The name "Western" was probably decided on over "Utah River Guides Association" because several of the founders had ties to and experience in running some of the rivers in Idaho and Wyoming, but it is doubtful if many there that day had a vision of what recreational river running was destined to become. Over time as the industry grew the WRG filed their last tax return and members joined America Outdoors. As state, federal and other management issues cropped up the Utah Guides and Outfitters was formed around 1980.

(#l.) Valves:

Different manufacturers around the world used various types of military valves, with thread patterns slightly different from one to another. "I can only guess at this point that it was an attempt to get around a patent on the valve," says DeChant. "I would see this from time to time with all valves, always a slight change in the valve to get around patents." One of the better ideas came from work with Greg Yeager at Down River Equipment in Denver. With Yeager, the Hyside production team progressed from an idea to a working valve by taking the military valve and improving its deficiencies: 1.) Add a cap to prevent water from entering, 2.) Employ a cap wire with metal balls at the ends to keep the cap from being lost, 3.) Use a stem- and spring-activated fill rather than a twist. The only downside of the valve was that it used the boot system, which became obsolete when a two-apart, twist-on valve came about shortly thereafter.(6) The design came at a time when both companies were experiencing good growth and identity in the marketplace for producing quality and reliable river products. From a business standpoint, at the time, even though the money had been spent on production it was a risk we decided not need to take.(7)

(#m.) Urethane Coating:

Hyside began experimenting with urethane coatings around 1997. By 2005 the process had been perfected and the coatings became a standard on most boat models. "One of the big things that set us apart from other whitewater manufacturers was spraying urethane. Urethane is used on metal ore mining chutes to extend the life of the metal. We had to work with a urethane supplier to find a primer that would allow Urethane to adhere to Hypalon. We worked on it for years and tested it, soaked it in water, all the different tests you can imagine, with sanding, not sanding and we finally got it to work. We did a video on how to spray it, and went to Korea and demonstrated it. Then we brought the Koreans here and re-demonstrated it."(2)

(#n) Quality Control:

Samgong has a production manager and they have stages of quality control tests for everything from air retention (every chamber has to hold air pressure for a number of days) to tensile strength of fabric and adhesive bonds. (2)

(#p.) Hyside “projects:”

Testing for the strongest base fabrics available they discovered double denier; Quick Release Thwart System provides a quick, clean method of thwart removal; Seven years of testing the application of urethane to Hypalon before it was introduced as a standard feature; Water proof /air tight zipper testing for storage compartments; Co-operation with the founders of Down River Equipment to develop a valve to replace the military-style valve; Research with DuPont to develop a neoprene-coated, fireproof paper; Neoprene-coated Kevlar developed;

(#q.) Samgong:

Samgong has around manufacturing 350 employees at the Korean factory and they have a great research and development department. It was almost a billion dollar company and some of their products were life rafts and rubber masks. When Desert Storm happened there were only a hand full of places in the world that made gas masks and DeChant’s Korean factory was one of them. He was getting calls from all over the world asking if they could buy a million gas masks. “The Koreans told the inquirers they can’t take the calls, call our agent in the U.S.”(2)

Korea is known for its quality textile industry and Samgong makes all of their fabric. They buy the pellets and all of the raw materials. Their coating and fabric machines are house-size and their roller system uses heat and pressure. DeChant had to source out the cutting (CAD) machines for the factory. Most CAD machines are manufactured by Auto-Matrix in Northern California.(#e,)
The factory uses their own adhesive. (2)

(#r.) Importing and Distribution:

Hyside’s products are imported through Long Beach Harbor. Hyside uses a freight company that has a warehouse in Long Beach and distributes the products (boats, paddles, adhesive and other products) directly from the import warehouse. Hyside ships small items from Kernville, California. Many of the boats remain at the Korean factory for international shipments.(2)

SPECIAL APPRECIATION:

- **Partial funding and support from the University of Utah, Marriott Library, Utah River Running Archives, Salt Lake City, UT**
- Funding by Val & Herm Hoops, oneway boatworks, P.O. Box 163, Jensen, UT 84035
- Richard DeChant - Hyside Inflatables

FOR INFORMATION REGARDING THIS DOCUMENT CONTACT:

**The University of Utah; J. Willard Marriott Library; Special Collections Department;
295 South - 1500 East; Salt Lake City, Utah 84112-0860 (www.lib.utah.edu)**

{ 1st draft 02/15/12; 2nd draft 10/14/2014 - 4260; 10/21/14 - 5154; 02/2015 - 6021; 03/12-6946; 4/15/2015 - 7017 words }