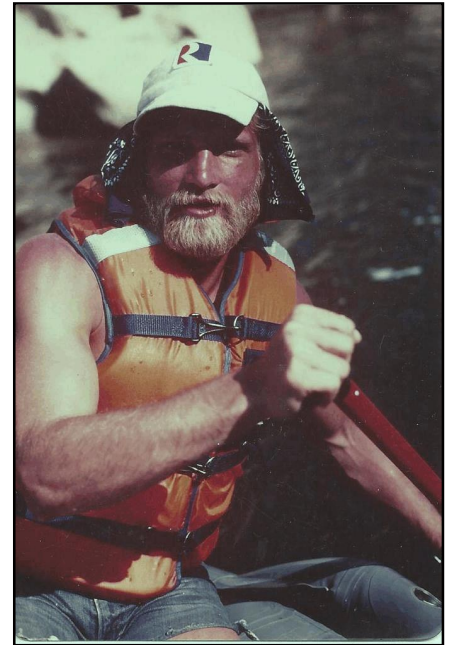


Richard DeChant

Richard, one of nine children, was born and raised in Wisconsin. Ironically he began his college years at the University of Whitewater (WI). Looking for warmer climates, he decided to transfer to Arizona State.

Like many, Richard's experience in boat building and design began at the lowest rung of river experience. In May of 1979, his first year in Arizona, the Salt River was flooding. Some friends from Wisconsin were visiting him and they went to Sunset Sporting Goods and bought a raft, life-jackets, and a cooler and they launched on the swollen Salt River. Before they had time to put their life jackets on, the boat was punctured and ripped from one end to the other. In Richard's words: "I put one of the people on the cooler and let them try to float and got them to shore and the other guy was stuck in the weeds so I ran along the bank and pulled him out. And we realized at that point we had no life-jackets and the water was too high to swim across. We got the attention of a fisherman and he went and got help. All we were looking for was some kind of boat to get us across the river. Come to find out they had called just about everybody and the police department, the sheriff everybody was out there but they were on one side of the river and we were on the other. It turned out that they waited until the 10 o'clock news was over and they used their helicopter from Phoenix to come and pick us up. That was my first rafting experience and I knew that I needed to get a tougher boat."



Richard DeChant

While in college in Tempe, Arizona he began working part time for Holubar a company that made high quality camping equipment. They began selling kayaks and Richard learned how to kayak in a swimming pool. While Richard was working for Holubar and going to school he was invited on a Grand Canyon trip and told he may have to 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. In two weeks the Grand Canyon trip launched and DeChant hiked to Phantom Ranch to meet the group. "I remember that one guy was solo in a big boat with all the gear. Turns out that he had flipped the boat five times and everybody bailed on him. No one wanted to get near his boat. I was the person who was supposed to take over that boat for the rest of the Canyon. And everybody looked at me like, you know how to row - don't you? That was basically my second experience, that Grand Canyon trip." After finishing at ASU, DeChant was offered a job with Holubar in Glendale, CA, as



DeChant (left) and Campways Steve Van Horne

Holubar had purchased the Kelty Company and DeChant was helping to buy inflatable boats for the chain. DeChant moved to Hollywood and commuted via bicycle. He brought with him a new boating department. In a short time Campways offered a position to Richard and he accepted it.

While at Campways he bought irregular boats and life jackets and started Sun Runner Rafting on the Salt River. DeChant was running Sun Runner river trips, working for Campways and taking classes. At Campways he learned warehousing, packaging, equipment design and development and importing. Through Campways DeChant had some contacts in Korea and by 1982 DeChant had Korean manufacturer Chin Yang Riken, which was soon purchased by Samgong, building his Sun Runner inflatable boats.

Dick had been living on a sailboat in the Long Beach harbor for five years. Since the Kern River was 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.

Sun Runner's new name was born on the Kern. Two local Kentville paddies, Rick and Katharine Haines, suggested the name "High side" to Dick who changed the spelling to Hyside.



Marianne in the Grand Canyon ~ 1986



Jerry Vantas (yellow), Richard DeChant (white) and Marianne
August 1986 ~ Grand Canyon

It was four years from DeChant's first river trip and his start in producing whitewater boats - he recognized the need for a higher-quality river boat early on and he did something to address that void. Richard is a long-time supporter of many private, commercial outfitter and environmental river organizations. He is a member of America Outdoors and a regular exhibitor at Sports and Trade shows.



Marianne, Richard and Nelson at Sierra South in Kernville ~ 2012



Hyside at Colorado River Outfitters & Utah Guides and Outfitters Trade Show ~ 2013 {Greg Yeager left & Brandon Williams right}.



Richard (in gray) at Dallas Sports Show with Sun Runner ~ 1984

Common Goals & Mischief!

I just had to put this in.
{Photo - Courtesy of Richard DeChant}

In the 1980s Richard DeChant called George Aragon (The head of Maravia) to tell him he was making a country-wide trip to sell boats and he invited George to meet him in Denver and go along. The draw was that they could play golf around the country! Both men respected the other's clients and they apparently had a good time.



Dick DeChant (center) and George Aragon (right). The photographer had asked Dick what horse he rode (note cowboy boots) and he struck the pose!

The photo was at some type of private boater gathering in Telluride, Colorado. Dick doesn't recall the year. "George and I shared common interests and hit it off together. We'd spend time swapping stories and I kept saying the Salt River was the miniature Grand Canyon and they ought to see it. We finally planned a trip.....what a flotilla; I recall we had 15 plus boats with people from all over. The gang from Cascade Outfitters (Jack Nelson) when it was still in Oregon came along. I even helped George and the new owners of Maravia company move from the Bay area to Idaho."

Dick recalls doing a MacGyver move at a trade show with George. "When we got bored the two of us slipped down the air ducts into the locked display area and did a major move around of everyone's equipment."

George being the production manager at Maravia, and then the Chief Officer, showed up less and less at national shows as time went by - and the times have changed.