

# RAVEN

| Issue No. 10 |

Best Practices Advance Awning, Marine Fabricators  
Stackable Beds Provide Comfort in the Field  
30-Year Link Ties Frinier, Sunbrella® Brands  
Fairystone Knits Glen Raven Partnership





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Dear Readers,

As the first quarter of the year comes to a close, I hope our Raven magazine finds you benefiting from early signs of the economic recovery.

With this issue's cover story our goal was to sound a positive note for the global economy, focusing on the growth potential of domestic Asian markets. Our Glen Raven Asia subsidiary is partnering with customers throughout the region to enhance the domestic retail infrastructure for China and to reach out to Chinese consumers with quality outdoor products.

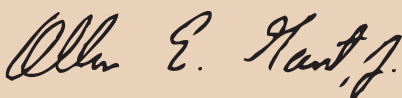
Also in this issue, we have included articles from two of our marine and awning fabrication customers that are focused on "best practices" within the industry. We included these articles because of the wealth of innovative ideas that are evolving within these companies and within the category. The growth of best practices can fuel market expansion and increased efficiencies for everyone.

Turning to the theme of innovation, this issue illustrates the importance of new ideas, particularly during trying economic times. Disc-O-Bed has developed a unique approach to stackable cots, originally targeted to the outdoor lifestyle, but now critically important for the nation's military and for disaster recovery.

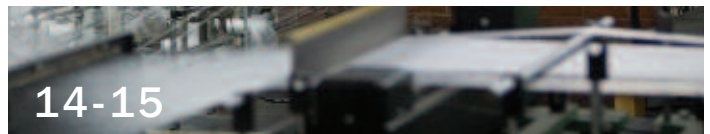
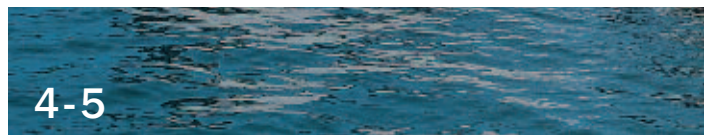
The complexity of the global economy requires forming successful partnerships with other companies, which is another theme of this issue. Our partnerships are expanding around the globe, including Dickson-Constant and Franciflex, which during the past 20 years have defined the awning market in France. Another of our long-term partners is internationally recognized home furnishing designer Richard Frinier who speaks of the critical elements needed for successful collaborations. We are also featuring an article on Fairystone, a warp knitting company essential to our performance offerings in automotive and military segments.

Finally, we offer a different type of Raven article about one of our associates, Richard Watkins. Richard has been an employee of Glen Raven for nearly 30 years, and we have included his story to celebrate the dedication of all associates, not only to the company, but also to their families. You will read how Richard assured college educations for his three children despite financial challenges and the many distractions and diversions faced by kids today.

Our goal with each issue of the Raven is to offer information and ideas that you can apply to your own business successes. We hope that our emphasis on the global economy, innovation, trade partnerships and dedication to family will be inspiring to you as we all navigate the coming months with a continued sense of cautious optimism.



Allen E. Gant, Jr.  
President and CEO  
Glen Raven, Inc.



## GLEN RAVEN ASIA PROMOTING DOMESTIC ASIAN ECONOMY

“Our work in China will ultimately benefit all Glen Raven customers as we develop new markets and new business opportunities that can benefit our trade partners.”

Hua Li (Wally)

For more than two decades, China has been the world's leading export nation. A large and eager workforce backed by government-financed infrastructure made China the export giant. But, times are beginning to change.

As Chinese consumers become more affluent and as America's appetite for consumption has been reduced by the recession, China is also becoming a nation of consumers. The Chinese government has stated its goal of encouraging increased domestic consumption, the success of which was evidenced during 2009 when Chinese consumers, for the first time ever, purchased more cars than Americans.

Glen Raven is exercising a leadership role in this economic megatrend, implementing marketing, sales and promotional strategies to help grow domestic Asian markets for shade products and to build the Sunbrella® brand. From a 190,000-square-foot manufacturing and product development center in Suzhou, Glen Raven Asia is fulfilling the company's original objectives for expanding into China in 2006.

“Many of the leading furniture companies in the U.S. had established manufacturing centers in Asia, so it was important for us to be close to them with a Sunbrella® fabrics resource,” says Hua Li (Wally), general manager of Glen Raven Asia. “Just as important, however, Asian markets promise to be among the fastest growing in the world for many years to come, and we will be an active participant in that growth. Our work in China will ultimately benefit all Glen Raven customers as we develop new markets and new business opportunities that can benefit our trade partners.”

The challenge to boosting domestic consumption in China is formidable. Retail infrastructure is in its infancy and outdoor lifestyles, long a favorite in the U.S. and Europe, are not well known to Chinese consumers. Private homeownership is just beginning to develop, and Chinese consumers have a tradition of saving rather than spending.

Glen Raven is approaching the challenge of developing domestic markets in Asia on numerous fronts. Strategies include extensive trade show participation and active roles with government programs promoting energy conservation. Other marketing activities have included up-fitting an extensive products showroom at the Glen Raven Asia headquarters and sponsoring informal lunch and learn sessions with interior designers. One of the most visible sponsorships during the past year was Glen Raven's participation in the “100 % Design Show,” an internationally recognized conference for cutting-edge home products.

“One of our most important strategies has been outreach to some of Asia's most prestigious five-star hotels and resorts,” said Ping Gu, Glen Raven Asia sales manager. “Sunbrella fabrics are featured on high visibility properties in the region, demonstrating the application of awnings and the value of the Sunbrella brand.”





Another essential strategy for growing in China is Glen Raven's close working relationships with many of the furniture manufacturers that it serves in the region. While these companies came to China for re-exporting to the U.S. and Europe, they too see the potential for selling to Chinese consumers. Glen Raven and its customers are working jointly to develop retail markets in China, with Ping providing leadership for a core Glen Raven team that is cultivating high-end commercial projects and retail development.

"While we take the outdoor lifestyle and quality outdoor products for granted in Europe and in the U.S., this is a new concept for China," Wally said. "It is both an educational process and a process of establishing retail outlets throughout Asia. Our goals are to create demand and open retail outlets to fulfill that demand."

One of Glen Raven's many Asian trade partners is Sorara Outdoor Living Co., Ltd., a wholly owned subsidiary of Zhejiang Zhengte Group Co., Ltd. Zhengte specializes in solar protection products, exporting to more than 40 countries including North America, Europe, Australia and Japan. Sorara Outdoor provides garden products and services to the Chinese market.

"For the export market, Sunbrella has good brand recognition and export sales have been growing steadily," said General Manager Chen Yong Hui. "For the domestic market, foreign management of hotels and design firms know Sunbrella, but many others do not. The outlook for growth is good, however, because the government is promoting energy savings that will benefit from exterior solar protection products. We are also seeing growth in the construction of residential villas, which will increase the demand for umbrellas, awnings and outdoor furniture. Success with the domestic market in China will require long-term marketing and patience."

Wally agrees that in terms of overall volume, re-exporting is still king in China, but change is in the wind. From past experience as an astute China observer, he predicts that the build up of domestic consumption will be slow, but when it takes hold the growth will be exponential.

"A few years ago, no one would have ever imagined that so many cars would be sold in China, but look at what's happened," Wally said. "In many ways, those of us working to grow the domestic market in China are truly pioneers, but we are confident that today's pioneers will be tomorrow's leaders."

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TOP (left to right) Hua Li (Wally), general manager of Glen Raven Asia, and Ping Gu, Glen Raven sales manager for greater China, are leading Glen Raven's efforts to help expand domestic markets for shade products throughout Asia. LEFT AND RIGHT Sunbrella® fabrics are growing in high-visibility applications throughout Asia, ranging from commercial and governmental locations to exclusive hotels and resorts.



## MARINE FABRICATOR PROVING BENEFITS OF LIFELONG LEARNING

“They are also eager to learn and to innovate, which is a core value they share with Glen Raven and makes us great partners.”

Dan Litster



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**F**or Cindy Boersema and Chris Ritsema, the secret to operating a successful marine fabrication business can be summed up in one word: “change.” These two successful entrepreneurs, located on the western shore of Lake Michigan, not only accept change, they actively seek it out and readily adapt new ideas.

“It’s easy to take the attitude that just because you have been in the business for 25 years, you know everything,” Chris said. “The fact is if you quit learning, you quit growing, and that’s a mistake we’re not going to make. For the most part, if there’s something new in the industry, we try to bring it on as quickly as we can.”

Cindy and Chris founded their marine fabricator company, The Nautical Needle, in 2005 after working for other marine fabrication and upholstery shops for many years. With an open mind and the courage of calculated risk takers, The Nautical Needle is an excellent illustration of how lifelong learning and an openness to change can translate into best practices:

**Division of labor** – From the very beginning, the division of labor between Cindy and Chris was clear. “At heart I am a seamstress and have been for nearly 30 years,” Cindy said. “I run the upholstery shop and Chris does the canvas work. We both know our strengths and we use them to our best advantage.”



**Diversification** – While marine fabrication is the core business, The Nautical Needle has become highly diversified for a small company. It leverages core capabilities in several areas ranging from marine interiors and automotive seating to residential and commercial interiors. The company has even developed prototype seating for hunting blinds.

**Employee development** – In addition to Chris and Cindy, The Nautical Needle has a staff of three other employees, with additional workers recruited during the busy season. “We can depend on our staff to run the business while we are away,” Chris said. “This allows us to attend trade shows and conferences and bring back new ideas.”

**Trade shows** – Cindy and Chris are avid trade show attendees, frequenting events sponsored by the Industrial Fabrics Association International (IFAI) and its sister organization, the Marine Fabricators Association (MFA.) “The national and regional shows are incredible opportunities to learn. We always come back with ideas to make our business better,” Cindy said. “This past year we returned from a show with plans for a new system to manage work orders. It has been a great timesaver and has boosted our productivity.”

**Partnerships** – As experts in their craft, Chris and Cindy are in an excellent position to form partnerships with other well-respected service providers. For example, Cindy often works with professional interior designers on cabin makeovers for large yachts. When an area manufacturing company needed a protective bumper for a machine process, Chris and Cindy were able to meet this highly customized need.

**Innovations** – Chris and Cindy are continually looking for innovative ideas that can create growth opportunities. “A lot of the boats on Lake Michigan are shrink wrapped for the winter months,” Chris said. “We manufacture a zippered door for shrink wrap that allows boat owners to gain easy access during the winter.”

**New tools** – Some of the best practices adopted by The Nautical Needle are relatively small improvements that make a big difference over time. “We have made many changes over the years – roller cutters for perfectly straight canvas cuts, center

point rulers for exact centers and tool storage trays along workbenches,” Cindy said.

**Vendor relationships** – The Nautical Needle could be named The Nautical Sponge for ways in which Chris and Cindy soak up information and put it to work for the business. “Our Tri Vantage representatives are always bringing in new products and information that we can use,” Chris said. “We also like the fact that we can order online from Tri Vantage and almost always get what we need within 24 hours.”

Dan Litster, Tri Vantage branch manager in Illinois, calls The Nautical Needle the ideal customer because of its professionalism and commitment to industry involvement.

“The great things about Cindy and Chris are the ways in which they give back to the industry and their eagerness to learn and try new things,” Litster said. “They are actively involved with professional associations, attend trade events, offer demonstrations and share their knowledge. They also are eager to learn and to innovate, which is a core value they share with Glen Raven and makes us great partners.”

For Cindy and Chris, learning, sharing and experimenting are all part of a day’s work at The Nautical Needle.

“We are always trying to improve and will consider just about any new ideas when they come along,” Cindy said. “Rather than just saying that a new idea won’t work, you have to try it to see if you are better or worse off. You never know until you try.”

On the Web at [www.thenauticalneedle.us](http://www.thenauticalneedle.us).

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**OPPOSITE PAGE (left to right)** Chris Ritsema and Cindy Boersema, owners of The Nautical Needle, are eager to bring new ideas and innovative practices into their growing marine fabrication business on the western shore of Lake Michigan. The entrepreneurs frequently attend trade shows and conferences searching for the latest advances that they can integrate into their company for the benefit of customers.

## SUGAR HOUSE AWNING KEEPS FOCUS ON INNOVATION FOR 69 YEARS

“When you have happy customers you have repeat sales and those are the best. Our customer surveys show that referrals are a big part of our business.”

Walt Peterson



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**A**fter 69 years in business, you might expect a company such as Sugar House Awning & Canvas Products to be a bit old fashioned and tradition bound. Nothing could be further from reality. Since its founding, the company has continually focused on innovation, growth and changing with the times.

Founded in 1941 by Walter Peterson, Sugar House Awning is located in Midvale, Utah, about 10 miles south of Salt Lake City and is today owned by the son of the founder, Walter Peterson Jr. From an original focus on awnings, the company today is the largest marine supplier in the Intermountain region and a leader in commercial and residential awnings, signs and banners. Total employment is 37 year-round, swelling to more than 50 during the spring and summer.

“We’ve grown over the years because we focus on our customers,” Peterson said. “When you have happy customers you have repeat sales and those are the best. Our customer surveys show that referrals are a big part of our business.”

During its long history, Sugar House has proven the effectiveness of several elements that could be described as “best practices” for awning and marine fabricators:

**Diversification** – From an initial focus on awnings, Sugar House has diversified into marine applications and other products that leverage the firm’s technical expertise. “We serve most of the boat dealers in this area, and we expanded into digital printing of banners six years ago with the purchase of four grand format digital printers.”

**Internet** – Also during recent years, Sugar House launched an Internet business, primarily selling banners and air conditioner covers on-line. “One of the best things about an Internet business is the efficiency of the marketing. We use pay-per-click advertising which gives you a direct return on your investment unlike traditional print or radio advertising which is hard to measure.”

**Debt avoidance** – Following conservative financial principles of the founder, who began his career as a bookkeeper, Sugar House has avoided debt, preferring to grow steadily over the years by reinvesting in the business. “A cash reserve is really important during a downturn such as everyone had last year. It’s easier to hunker down when you don’t have large interest payments.”

**Mistake detection/quality assurance** – Sugar House has created a system of re-work sheets that are used to record fabrication errors, the majority of which are corrected before a job ever





leaves the shop floor. “Re-work sheets allow us to document what went wrong and the cost. This system keeps us focused on quality, and we’ve seen the number of mistakes go down each year.”

**Documented procedures** – Over the years, Sugar House has developed written procedures for most of the work, so no one is re-inventing the wheel on each job. “Written procedures assure that we repeat the results from one job to another.”

**Customer surveys** – When awning and marine jobs are completed, Sugar House sends customer satisfaction surveys to random customers for feedback. “We ask customers to give us a letter grade in each of 12 different areas. If we receive less than a ‘B’ grade in any area, we contact the customer. Our customers are always very appreciative of the fact that we care enough to call and address their concerns.”

**Delivery times** – Quick delivery of marine covers is a hallmark of Sugar House, with one week the standard lead time during the busy summer months when owners want their boats back in service as fast as possible. “If a boat dealer calls us and needs a boat cover in one day to sell a boat, we make it happen. The key to meeting deadlines is never getting behind in the first place.”

Anthony Pappalardo with the Tri Vantage Denver office works with a team that assures that Sugar House receives reliable supply chain support and ongoing updates on new products and services. The diversity of Tri Vantage’s offerings has supported the diversification of Sugar House.

“We like to think that no customer ever leaves our business without feeling they have been well taken care of,” Peterson said. “We’ve been around for 69 years, so customers can be confident that we’ll be around next year and the next. Over the years, the customer service aspect of our business has been the most important. Our guys work hard to meet deadlines, and we rarely fail to get things done when we say we will.”

On the Web at [www.sugarhouseawning.com](http://www.sugarhouseawning.com).

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**OPPOSITE PAGE** Walt Peterson is continuing a tradition of innovation that began when his father founded Sugar House Awning & Canvas Products 69 years ago. **TOP** Sugar House Awning is one of largest awning, marine and banner fabricators in the Intermountain region, continuing to innovate and add new products each year.

## DISC-O-BED STACKS UP TO EXTREME APPLICATIONS

“One of the reasons that Glen Raven has been such a good partner is that they are also a family business and can make decisions quickly for their customers.”

Brigitte Owen

**E**xtrême conditions require extreme equipment, and this fact of life is fueling the success of Disc-O-Bed, an innovative cot system that was initially a godsend for emergency relief efforts and today has become a favorite of the U.S. military for efficient troop deployment.

“My father invented and patented the Disc-O-Bed as a stackable, easy-to-use cot for camping and outdoor lifestyles,” says Brigitte Owen, who serves as marketing executive for the company, which was founded in South Africa. “While we are still active in the outdoor markets, our growth has come from human relief efforts and the military.”

The first major deployment of Disc-O-Beds occurred in 1999 when the Red Cross used the stackable cots for refugees in the war-torn Balkan regions of Kosovo. Disc-O-Bed units were later provided to earthquake victims in Turkey in 2001. Based on these successful applications, the U.S. Military began to express interest in the system for troop deployments.

“The primary benefit to the military is the sturdy way that our cots can be stacked,” said Doug Owen, company vice president and husband of Brigitte. “Stacking cots greatly reduces the billet or tent area for troops in the field, which is a significant advantage in terms of cost and efficiency.”

The unusual name of the product – Disc-O-Bed – is based on the central innovative element – an interlocking disc used to attach one cot on top of the other. Bunks can be securely stacked in seconds without the need for tools. Everything simply snaps into place.

Because of the potential to serve the U.S. Military, Disc-O-Bed relocated to the U.S. in 2004, establishing an office in the Atlanta area. As a supplier to the nation’s military, the company sought out American trade partners, including a textiles company that could provide fabrics for the cots and associated storage lockers.

“We met with two other textile groups before we met with Glen Raven,” Doug said. “Once we started working with Glen Raven, we knew we had the right partner. They had the technical ability to create the fabrics we needed to our specifications and they could do everything all under one roof.”

Marshall Hobson, a technical fabrics specialist with Glen Raven, serves as the primary liaison with Disc-O-Bed for quality assurance and new product development. He says that Glen Raven used all of the company’s resources in creating a unique fabric for Disc-O-Bed.

“We began with development of specific yarns for their needs and worked forward through weaving, dying and finishing,” he said. “Fabrics used for Disc-O-Bed include both laminated and coated products that meet every need, from sleeping surfaces to attached footlockers.”

The fabrics that Glen Raven provides to Disc-O-Bed are woven at its Burnsville, N.C. plant, finished at the Park Avenue center

in Burlington, N.C. and coated at facilities in Statesville, N.C. Glen Raven and Disc-O-Bed collaborate closely to meet strict quality and performance standards set by the military.

“The Disc-O-Bed has been subjected to just about every test you can imagine,” Doug said. “There are no compromises on any of its components, from steel frames to the fabrics we receive from Glen Raven. It’s been used in all types of extreme conditions, from deserts to Antarctica.”

In addition to durability and ease of stacking, Disc-O-Bed comes with a lifetime warranty and replacement parts. Best of all, as far as soldiers are concerned, Disc-O-Bed boasts sleeping comfort owing to a design that provides mattress-like support. While military deployment and disaster relief are the primary uses for Disc-O-Bed, outdoor products retailer Cabela’s offers the bed in single and stackable versions through its on-line catalog.

According to Doug, the synergies between Disc-O-Bed and Glen Raven are strong, leading to continual innovation and new product development.

“We identified hospitals as a new market for our beds, and we needed a special fabric that is fire retardant and anti-microbial,” he said. “Within three months, Glen Raven had the fabric ready for hospital cots, and we went immediately into distribution. With the threat of pandemics, such as H1N1, hospitals need cot systems that can be stored and quickly deployed.”

Disc-O-Bed today is a global company, with distribution in Brazil, Canada, China, Japan and Germany. It maintains an office in South Africa where the company was founded, managed by Brigitte’s brother, Richard Bonatz, who serves as president. While military applications are the primary market, Disc-O-Beds were deployed during Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans and the earthquake in Haiti.

“Disc-O-Bed remains a family business, and it’s really a passion for all of us. We live and breathe it,” Brigitte said. “One of the reasons that Glen Raven has been such a good partner is that they are also a family business and can make decisions quickly for their customers.”

On the Web at [www.discobed.com](http://www.discobed.com).

**OPPOSITE PAGE** Doug Owen, vice president of Disc-O-Bed, with the company’s innovative Arm-O-Cot stackable cot, which has been deployed worldwide by the U.S. military. The cot system comes complete with footlockers, all manufactured with fabrics specifically created for the beds by Glen Raven Technical Fabrics.



DICKSON CONSTANT,  
FRANCIAFLEX SUPPORT  
SHADING GROWTH  
IN FRANCE



Virtually anywhere you travel in France, you will see awnings. From small shops to large shopping centers and from cottages to mansions, awnings are an essential part of the architectural and cultural landscape.

The popularity of awnings in France and throughout Europe is part aesthetic - they complement classic architecture - and part practical - awnings reduce energy costs in a region of the world where energy costs are high. The widespread use of awnings in France is also the result of a strategic partnership formed more than 20 years ago between Dickson-Constant and Franciaflex.

Both companies recognized many years ago that for the awning market to grow in Europe, it would require a combination of specialized skills. With more than 100 years of experience in textiles, Dickson-Constant would provide enduring fabrics, while the engineering expertise of Franciaflex would assure well-designed, innovative and expertly fabricated shade structures.

“Franciaflex and Dickson are two of the pioneers in the French awning industry,” said David Corfmat, general sales manager for Dickson-Constant. “Both companies joined forces to develop the awning and shade business at a period of time when the market was almost nonexistent.”

Franciaflex, which has been the largest manufacturer of awnings in France for 50 years, belongs to the SFPI Group, which is also a leader in shutters in France. The company is based in Orléans (South Paris) and has five facilities in France. Franciaflex manufactures approximately 50,000 awnings each year for professional awning retailers and for the do-it-yourself market.

“The awning marketplace in France is quite different than in the U.S.” said Leib Oehmig, president of Glen Raven Custom Fabrics. “While the U.S. awning industry is comprised of literally thousands of individually owned awning businesses, in France Franciaflex is clearly the leader in manufacturing awnings that are retailed by an extensive network of independent dealers throughout the country.”

In addition to its leadership in awning fabrication, Franciaflex also offers interior blinds and shades, motorized shutters and PVC and aluminum windows. Dickson-Constant is a major provider of performance fabrics for many of the products produced by Franciaflex.

“The awning market has changed substantially during the last 20 years in France,” said Benjamin Bonnard, marketing director for Franciaflex. “Each year we work with Dickson on a co-branding communications program directed at our awning retailers' network. We have gradually evolved from a traditional supplier/customer relationship with Dickson-Constant to a true partnership in which our mutual interests are closely linked.”

The partnership between Franciaflex and Dickson-Constant is reflected in an awning retailers' network of 75 companies known as Storistes de France. Retailers participating in the network are independent businesses that are linked to Franciaflex as the sole awnings suppliers. Members of Storistes de France are also members of the Dickson Official Dealer program.

“The collaboration between Franciaflex and Dickson-Constant results in marketing benefits for every network member,” Corfmat said. “By pooling our interests and our resources, we can offer network members a full array of marketing support, including a co-branded marketing communications program, advertising tools and showroom materials.”

Storistes de France originated in 1989 and continues its emphasis on support for true awning professionals. To qualify for network membership and all services, each member must offer consumers the full range of products from Franciaflex.

“The network began with a single, simple goal in mind: expand and improve marketing communications in support of the awning marketplace,” Bonnard said. “Since its founding, the network has grown in size and market impact. We have brought innovation to the awning category to further reinforce our position.”

“By pooling our interests and our resources, we can offer network members a full array of marketing support, including a co-branded marketing communications program, advertising tools and showroom materials.”

David Corfmat

Supplier networks are common in many different industry segments as companies look to leverage marketing budgets among companies with common customers. The key to success with these types of ventures is well established within the culture of Storistes de France.

“Through this channel our two companies have the ability to support a national marketing communications program that promotes new products, increases our individual brand awareness and supports the vitality and growth of the awning marketplace,” Corfmat said.

Strategic objectives shared by Dickson-Constant and Franciaflex filter down to retail network members as well.

“The key element is always customer satisfaction,” Bonnard said. “This is true not only between Franciaflex and Dickson as direct suppliers but also indirectly through our common customers - the awning retailers. Both Franciaflex and Dickson invest in the business with the same goal: expand the business and make it as profitable as possible for all of us.”

For more information on Franciaflex, visit [www.franciaflex.com](http://www.franciaflex.com).

# RICHARD FRINIER AND GLEN RAVEN ADVANCE SUNBRELLA® DESIGN



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**F**or more than three decades, Richard Frinier has been a driving force in the world of home décor. He led the outdoor industry into exciting new directions during a 20-year career as chief creative officer for Brown Jordan and continues to inspire trade partners and delight consumers with home furnishings, textiles and accessories he creates for Century, Dedon, Currey & Company and Sunbrella® fabrics.

The fabrics that Frinier designs for Sunbrella are part of an overall commitment to continually elevate the brand's design aesthetic for the benefit of Glen Raven customers and for consumers. The latest Sunbrella fabrics for home décor are creating new opportunities in several market segments, from upholstery to outdoor cushions.

In 2009, Frinier received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the International Casual Furnishings Association for his contributions over the past 30 years to the industry and his community. During a recent interview, Frinier talked about his relationship with Glen Raven and Sunbrella fabrics and his vision for the future of home décor.

## **What role has Glen Raven/Sunbrella® played in your career?**

As a designer, having the right materials makes for successful products. At Brown Jordan, for instance, I would create new frame finishes and then work very closely with Sunbrella to match fabric constructions, patterns and colorways, I knew it was not just about the shape of my furniture designs, but the whole composition of form, function, finish and fabric.

## **How have you gone about translating your vision with Sunbrella fabrics?**

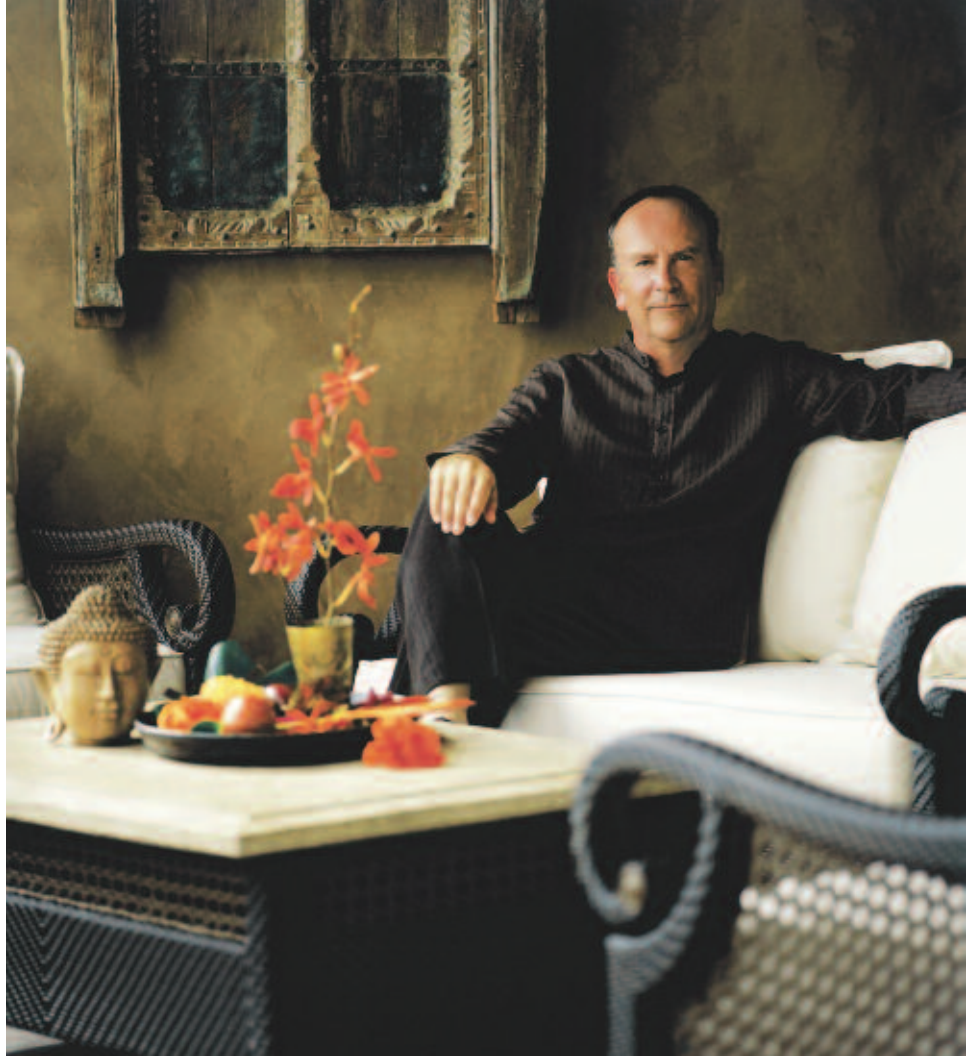
During my years at Brown Jordan, I was able to keep ahead of the competition with the help of Glen Raven's textile design group. It was important for me to develop the fabric for upholstery to complement each year's marketing story, as well as developing basics for a successful core fabric assortment.

"The high level of professionalism and expertise at Glen Raven represents the best-of-the-best and I am proud to work with them and count them as friends."

Richard Frinier

## **What is the synergy between Richard Frinier and Sunbrella today?**

Over the past eight years, Glen Raven and I have worked together to create a collection of tonal-textured constructions and patterns inspired by rapidly homogenizing cultures around the world. We have developed specific constructions inspired by my furniture and lighting designs, as well as fabric to inspire the industry at large.



**When you launched your own creative consultancy in 2002, why did you decide to include Sunbrella and Glen Raven as a partnership?**

When Catherine (Frinier) and I launched our creative consultancy in 2002, the first company we chose to partner with was Glen Raven. We chose Glen Raven because of our long relationship, mutual respect and admiration for the brand, David Swers (Glen Raven vice president) and his entire team. We believed our contribution would be mutually beneficial, offering creative access to influence not just our own work and co-branded clientele, but also the entire furniture industry.

**How do you go about working with Glen Raven to bring your designs to life?**

I am very fortunate to collaborate with Glen Raven and its talented design and development group pretty much year round. They are amazing to work with in the experimentation and development of new ideas. Usually, I have a specific idea and direction, but sometimes too many ideas seem to emerge all at once. Together we focus the creative effort, evolve concepts and present thoughtful collections. For a furniture designer, fabric is a critical component to the overall design. To have this opportunity to create, collaborate and experience their technical expertise is so very important.

**What do you consider to be the key attributes of a good trade partner?**

When we formed our design consultancy, we wanted to align ourselves with only a few “perfect partners.” Perfect partners for us are business professionals with whom we may experience

a higher level of achievement and successes for choosing to work together. In the end, it’s a lot of hard work. So, to surround yourself with pros makes the task enjoyable and rewarding. The high level of professionalism and expertise at Glen Raven represents the best-of-the-best and I am proud to work with them and count them as friends.

**How do you see your company evolving in the future?**

I like to think that I am doing my part to design the future and that includes designing my own career. In that light, I believe and always say, “The best is yet to come.” I cannot imagine evolving my career and craft without continuing to evolve my relationship with Glen Raven/Sunbrella, which I see materializing in new collections and, as always, the chance to introduce new business opportunities through future collaborations with my own clients and colleagues along the way.

On the Web at [www.richardfrinier.com](http://www.richardfrinier.com).

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**ABOVE** During the past 30 years, Richard Frinier has been highly influential in the design of home décor, first as chief creative officer for Brown Jordan and over the past eight years with his own design consultancy. **OPPOSITE PAGE** Frinier’s design creations for the Sunbrella® brand emphasize classic tonal textures and reflect the convergence of diverse global design influences.

## PARTNERSHIPS ESSENTIAL TO LEVERAGING SPECIALIZED SKILLS

In today's complex global economy, astute companies realize that they cannot possibly be experts in every process throughout the supply chain. To meet customers' needs for cutting edge products and services that are competitive on a worldwide basis, specialization and ongoing partnerships that leverage expertise are essential.

This has been the guiding principle behind a long and successful partnership between Glen Raven Technical Fabrics and Fairystone Fabrics, one of the nation's top warp knitting companies. The results speak for themselves: introduction of innovative automotive headliner fabrics featured by virtually every major car manufacturer and leadership in protective fabrics for the nation's military.

"Warp knit fabrics with the design sophistication and quality required by our automotive and military customers is a complex challenge that is best met by a specialist such as Fairystone who makes the capital investments needed to remain a leader," said Harold Hill, president of Glen Raven Technical Fabrics.

Fairystone was founded by Harold Bobo, who returned to the States after World War II and pursued a career in textiles. After more than 20 years working for other companies, he decided to strike out on his own in 1968.

"The name of our company – Fairystone – comes from a state park in Virginia that my father visited on vacation," said Tom Bobo, son of the founder who continues as the owner today. "Fairy Stones are naturally occurring and found only on the top of Bull Mountain in Virginia. The stones are shaped like a cross and considered good luck charms."

The allure of the Fairy Stone has been strong for many years. Presidents Teddy Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson both carried the stones, as did aviation pioneer Charles Lindbergh and inventor Thomas Edison. Adopting the name of the stone for the company appears to have been good luck for the Burlington, N.C.-based Fairystone.





“One of our greatest core strengths, and one that we share with Glen Raven, is credibility,” said Jim Bryan, Fairystone president. “Whether a customer is working with our company for the first time or the 100th time, they can have the confidence that we will do what we say we are going to do. If there is a better way to do something, we’ll suggest it to our customers; if we don’t feel like something can be accomplished, we’ll tell our customers that too.”

“By focusing on being the industry’s best source for warp knit fabrics, we have weathered the ups and downs and have every reason to be eternally optimistic.”

Tom Bobo

Fairystone’s focus on credibility is backed by continual investments in sophisticated warp knitting equipment that incorporates laser-guided quality assurance technology to produce near perfect fabrics. Warp knitting is a fabric formation technique in which yarns run the length of the fabric, resulting in fabrics up to 180 inches in width, ideal for applications such as automotive headliners.

Fairystone specializes in high-end applications, such as warp knit fabrics that incorporate carbon yarns used for garments worn in electrostatic free environments, such as clean rooms. Sophisticated equipment and systems and talented employees allow Fairystone to knit fabrics with yarns as small as 15 denier, which is comparable to human hair in thickness.

The company also invests in its people and in process improvements. During the past year, Fairystone achieved ISO 9001:2008 certification and has ongoing educational and input sessions with employees to identify opportunities for process improvements. A recent employee exercise in “value stream mapping” challenged the

company’s workforce to breakdown each process into individual steps and identify opportunities to do things better.

It is this continual focus on process improvement that feeds innovative thinking between Fairystone and Glen Raven.

“Our technical people work closely with Glen Raven’s technical people,” Bryan said. “The Fairystone team provides warp knit expertise, while the Glen Raven Technical Fabrics team defines customer requirements and provides technical fabrics finishing through its Park Avenue plant.”

Within industry jargon, Fairystone is known as a “commission” warp knitting operation, which means it is typically one or two steps removed from ultimate end users. This separation, however, does not dampen Fairystone’s obsessive focus on end results.

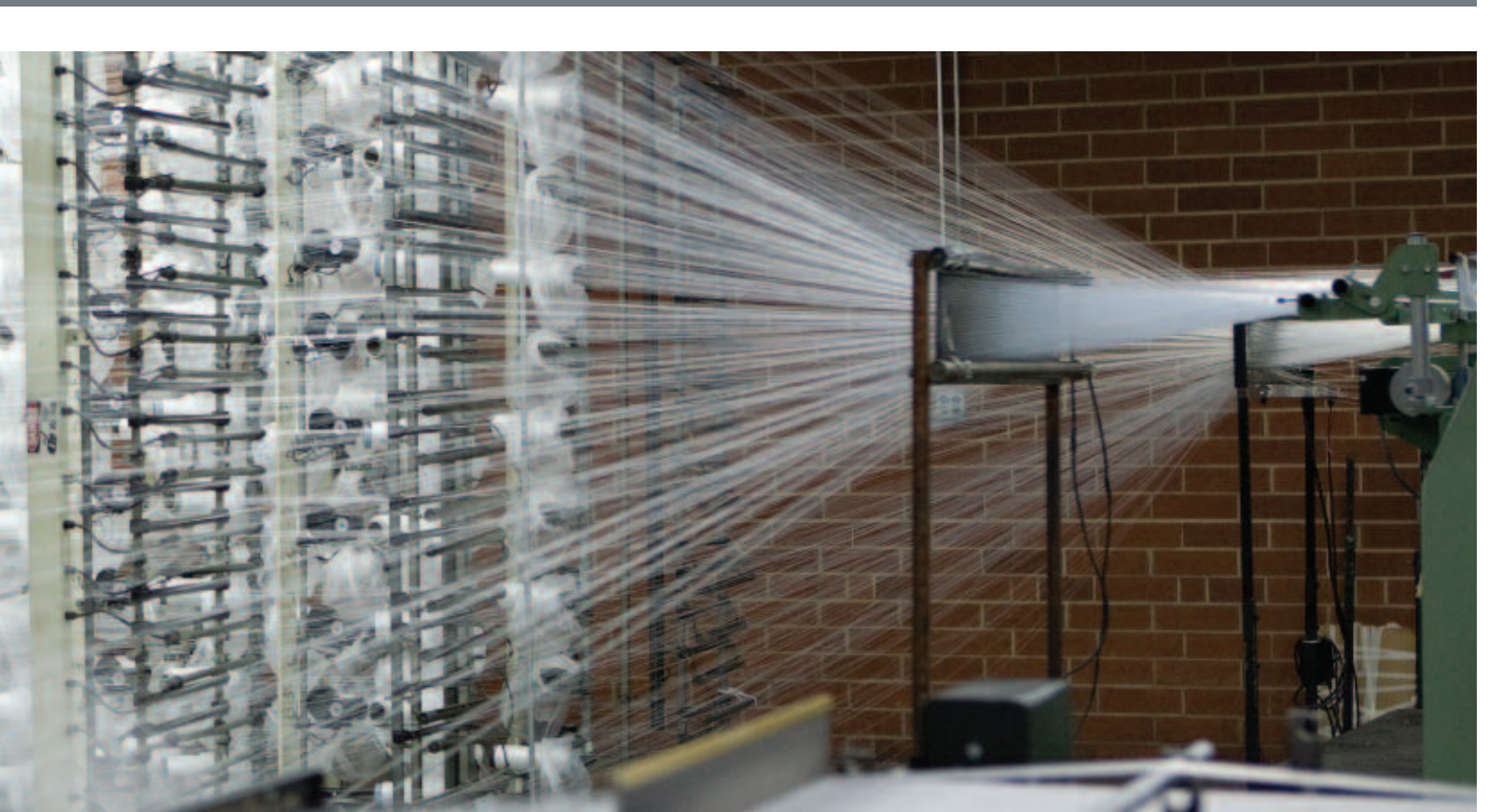
“We do our best work when we are partners with our customers,” Bryan said. “We enjoy a core group of customers with whom we share mutual respect. Our customers require quality, reliable delivery and open communications when issues arise.”

Fairystone has certainly felt the impact of the global recession and must compete on a global basis. Over the years, the company has seen work return to the company’s plant when other suppliers were unable to deliver the quality required or meet demanding schedules.

“I tell people that to be in our business you have to be an eternal optimist,” Bobo said. “By focusing on being the industry’s best source for warp knit fabrics, we have weathered the ups and downs and have every reason to be eternally optimistic.”

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**OPPOSITE PAGE (left to right)** Tom Bobo, owner of Fairystone Fabrics, and Jim Bryan, Fairystone president, with some of the company’s state-of-the-art warp knitting systems. **BELOW** As one of the industry’s most advanced warp knitters, Fairystone often works with yarns as fine as human hair in creating premium technical fabrics.



## DISCIPLINE, SAVINGS, HARD WORK LEAD TO COLLEGE EDUCATIONS



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**W**hen Richard Watkins was growing up in rural Warren County in the 1950s and '60s, education was not that essential for securing a good job. So, in the 11th grade he decided to leave high school for work in a textile factory, and he purchased his first car, a 1969 Chevy Chevelle.

After learning the ins and outs of textile machinery through on-the-job training with his first textile employer, Watkins joined what is today's Glen Raven Norlina plant in Norlina, N.C. That was some 30 years ago, and Watkins is still on the job at Norlina, assuring that the twisting frames under his stewardship run with maximum quality and efficiency.

"Richard is extremely knowledgeable, dependable and dedicated to the job," said Ricky Loyd, maintenance coordinator at the Norlina Plant. "The end product of this plant – yarn for spinning into Sunbrella® fabrics – passes through the twisting frames that Richard maintains. There's not much that gets past Richard."

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Ricky Loyd

When Watkins first joined the Norlina plant it was one of the nation's largest producers of panty hose. With changing women's fashion from skirts to pants and with the production of panty

hose shifting to low-cost, off-shore manufacturers, the Norlina plant was converted from a maker of panty hose to a producer of acrylic yarn for Glen Raven's Anderson, S.C. Sunbrella® manufacturing center. The changes in processes and equipment were dramatic, requiring Watkins to retool his skill set.

"I have been around machinery my whole life, from the farm to my first jobs in textiles," Richard said. "I can pick up just about anything having to do with machines."

While Watkins' employment record is impressive, equally impressive is the fact that his three children each completed college and have gone onto professional jobs in healthcare and education. This accomplishment didn't just happen. It took discipline, hard work and savings.

"My parents farmed an eight-acre cotton and tobacco farm here in Warren County, and they did the best they could for their children," Watkins recalled. "With five brothers and two sisters growing up together it was rough. Our parents gave us all they could, and I wanted to do the same for my kids."

Every parent knows the challenges of keeping children focused on their studies when television and other diversions are readily available. These were just some of the challenges the Watkins family faced in giving the children a great start in life.

"My wife and I encouraged our kids to study, to stay in school and go to college," he said. "We had to push them sometimes, and it paid off."

Daughter Kiesha, 36, is a graduate of Vance Granville Community College and lives in Wilson where she is a high school counselor. Karesa, 32, graduated from A&T State University and teaches in Winnsboro, and Richard, Jr., 28, studied at Winston-Salem College and is a physical therapist in Winston-Salem.



“It wasn’t easy. Money was always tight,” Watkins recalled. “We saved, we borrowed and my children were good students and won scholarships. I am really proud of my kids. It feels good knowing what they’ve been able to accomplish.”

Job markets have certainly changed from 30 years ago, and Watkins recognizes the value of education beyond high school.

“Times have really changed from when I was growing up,” he said. “A high school education isn’t enough any more. It’s rough out there without a college degree. When I was growing up you could get a job with a high school degree, but it’s not the same today.”

Watkins is not unlike a large number of Glen Raven associates who have long service records with the company and who have raised first generations of college graduates. Approximately 8 percent of the Glen Raven workforce in North America has more than 30 years service with the company. Nearly 30 percent of Glen Raven associates have been with the company for 20 years or more.

“The greatest strengths of our company are the skills that our associates possess and their dedication to serving our customers,” said Allen E. Gant, Jr., president of Glen Raven, Inc. “We continue to invest in training and career opportunities, and we offer benefit programs that encourage associates to stay with us.”

At age 59, Watkins is beginning to think about retirement. But for now, he enjoys his job and the people he works with, and he plans to stay with Glen Raven as long as he can.

“I love it here,” he said. “It’s a good atmosphere to work in. It’s like family.”

When Watkins does decide to retire, he’s not sure how he will spend his time, but he has one potential project. He still owns that 1969 Chevelle he bought when he left high school.

“It was my first car, so I’m holding on to it,” he said. “It doesn’t run now, but it probably would if I worked on it.”

ABOVE Richard Watkins, twisting frames mechanic at Glen Raven’s Norlina Plant, has been maintaining equipment at the plant for nearly 30 years, during which time he also assured that his three children completed their college educations.



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