

“How Riviera changed my life.”

By John Mc Nally

Dumb title, you may think. After all, anyone lucky enough to get their hands on a Riviera just knows their life's going to change, and a great change it will be. New friends, new horizons, new you name it. All the regular cliches. This particular life change is a bit different, even if it's just because of the distance involved.



Sandy Campbell proudly displays a good sized yellow tail she caught off Cape Brett, New Zealand.

The islands off Cairns

The lady's name is Sandy Campbell. Grew up on a farm in Oregon, a state in the US of A not noted for big time recreational boating. Had the usual colourful and interesting life (as does everybody except most don't appreciate it) and ended up, in the 90s, hanging around San Francisco's magnificent waterways on friends' boats doing a bit of cruising and socialising and fishing. Sandy had quickly become hooked (sorry) on, of all things, game fishing.

She also had a dream of having her very own boat and fishing in some exotic location.

Then she met Richard Boland, the local Riviera dealer who introduced her to the 2000 Riviera 48. Yeeehaaa! Love at first sight.

For the next eight months, Sandy worked with Richard, detailing just exactly what she wanted on her Riviera. This even included a trip down under to the Riviera factory to check the finer points.

And this is just part of the story of her boat's delivery.

At this point in time, your scribe must come good with a few facts.

Thanks to the magic of modern telecommunications plus the postal service,

I've been able to touch base with both Sandy and Richard. Sadly I was not on board for the first big trip, even though I've travelled the waters in question.

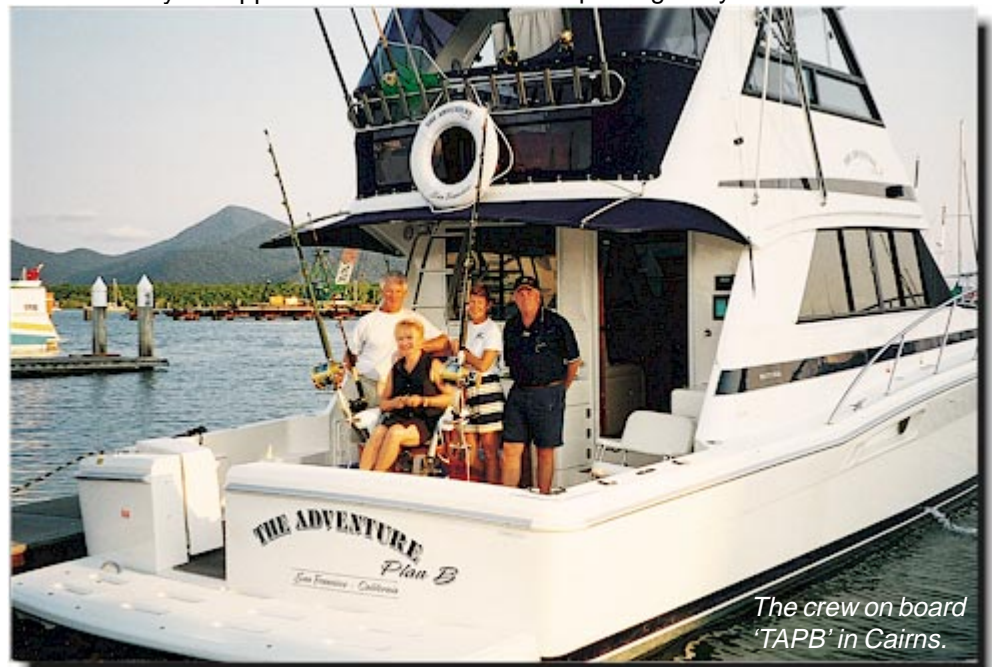
Therefore, what follows is based on Richard's diary of what took place along with subsequent communications with them both.

He describes the occasion as the delivery of the century and since it took place in the Year 2000, the hoary old debate about which century it happened in raises its

ugly head. Not that it really matters.

Sandy lives in Los Gatos, California and the shortest way to get a brand new Riviera from the Gold Coast factory at Coomera to the old Los Gatos is a quick sprint up to the port of Brisbane, sling it onto a container ship and point the lot straight at the west coast of the USA. Exciting for those who just lurve container ships but delivery of the century???

Needless to say, that was not the chosen passage. Try Gold Coast to Lizard



The crew on board 'TAPB' in Cairns.

Island to Auckland to Cairns...a bit of a roundabout journey you might say. For those not up on their island locations, Lizard is a squirt of a thing that's a bit north of Cape Flattery which is a bit north of Cooktown which is a bit north of... the message is becoming much clearer. This is anything but the regular route to Los Gatos.

Disclosure: I have a genuine soft spot for 'Americans.

Sure, they can be the proverbials, just like every other national group but they've got this one thing of wearing their heart on their sleeve and just basically wanting everyone to like them. And they're always first to acknowledge that at times they are right D.H.s. Like this bloke Richard.

After three days of extensive sea trials and checks of Sandy's hot off the press 2000 Riviera 48, a crew consisting of Sandy, Richard, skipper and first mate (Geoff & Trish Ferguson) are ready to head out of the Broadwater at first light, bound for Cairns.

First light usually appears around 5.00am. First light on this occasion finally showed up around 8.20am, which by Queensland stands is almost 'crackachoob' time.

Why so late? Richard forgot to pick up the rubber duck from storage at the Riviera plant. Travelling 1,000 miles on wet stuff without a life raft is not a good move.

Thanks to Craig Jones at the Riviera plant, a couple of the lads were despatched with duck in a Riviera van on a delivery mission. No worries mate! Not a problem, glad we could help. This, of course, is just your Riviera type service but it's nothing compared to what happened a bit further down the track.

So the fearless four were finally on their way. Capt. Geoff, who'd made this journey on several occasions, set a course five to ten miles off the coast and proceeded to dazzle the visitors with a range of sights and an assortment of historical trivia: Mount Tempest, which ap

parently is the world's highest pile of sand at 1,760 ft; Cape Moreton lighthouse, which was a gift from Queen Victoria; the spectacular Glasshouse Mountains, so named by J. Cook because when the first rays of the day hit them, they looked just like, well, glasshouses.

He also mentioned Matthew Flinders Reef and claimed it to be the beginning or the end of the coral chain. They must have

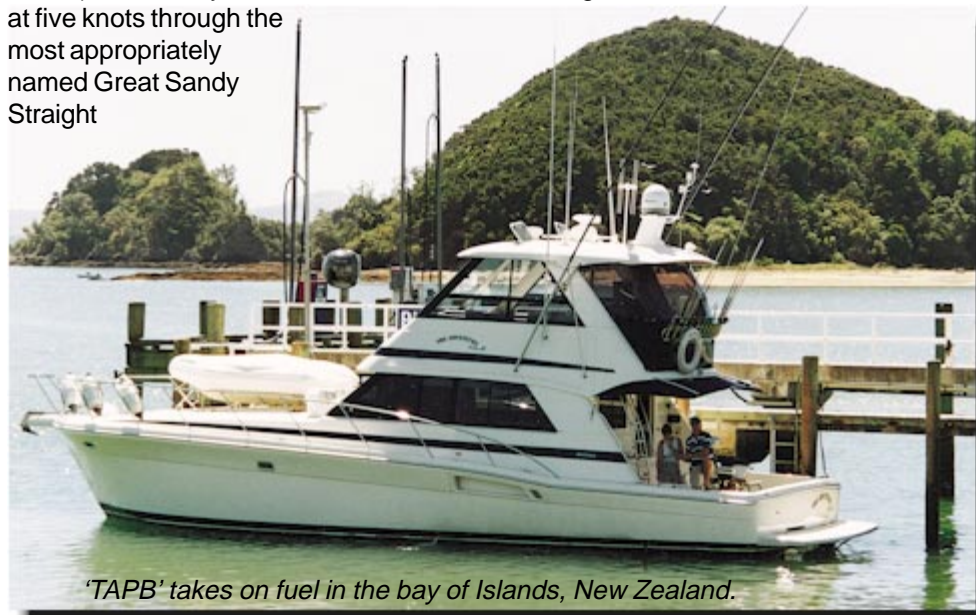


Sandy at the gates to the America's Cup village in Auckland, New Zealand.

moved things around since your scribe was last up there. Back then it used to start/finish off Gladstone.

This part of Oz has quite some superb Aboriginal place names, one gem being Mooloolaba, home of the famous yacht club and a magnet for game fishing. Didn't tempt our adventurers though.

Their next challenge was crossing the bar into Tin Can Bay (a piece of cake thanks to some good oil from the Volunteer Coast Guard) followed by an hour and a half crawl at five knots through the most appropriately named Great Sandy Straight



'TAPB' takes on fuel in the bay of Islands, New Zealand.

to eventually drop anchor in the Mary River at 5.00pm. Phew! 141 nautical miles and 8 hours, 41 minutes since that crack of dawn departure. Definitely time for a cleansing!

Day 2. Saturday. Important to note the day because in the Land Down Under, that's the start of the weekend, a two day period that the locals treat with great reverence as they pursue the quest for total relaxation.

This time it was a genuine first light start as The Adventure, Plan B aka TAPB nudged out of the Great Sandy Straight into Hervey Bay, destination Bundaberg.

At this point Richard decided to check the fuel system, more as an alternative to simply sitting back and indulging in the glorious surrounds. After all, Sandy was his client so he had to look the part. That meant checking stuff that never needs checking because it never goes wrong. Didn't matter, just so long as he looked like an expert.

Advice: always be very thrifty and cautious when using the word never.

Bottom line was that Richard couldn't hear the transfer pump so they shut down the mains just to double check. Not a problem. Pump working like a dream. Fire up the mains. Try main. Starboard doesn't want to be fired up. Caterpillar engines, especially the new electronic models, never fail to start.

Never say never.

So with Sandy at the helm, and the blokes down below trying to start the starboard donk, TAPB worked its way on one engine across Hervey Bay to the Bundaberg fuel wharf which is at a little place called Burnett Heads, Bundaberg being inland a bit.

Geoff was straight on to the mobile phone to the local Cat dealer. Except no one was home. Remember the reference earlier to weekends? Right! Turns out all the Cat service centres were on strike protesting about overtime (read weekend) work. Told you weekends were sacred. Anyway, what follows is the stuff from which legends evolve.

With no other options, Geoff called Craig Jones' mobile. Saturday, so Craig's not at Riviera. His day off. Weekend. Chance to spend some time at home with the family.

"Leave it with me!"

Within the half hour, Darryl Boltz from Energy Power Energy Systems Australia in Brisbane was on the blower. EPSA supplies Cat engines to Riviera. After the usual formalities – "What's up mate?" – and much follow-up discussion, Dazza hadn't got a clue as to what the problem might be. Saturday was also his day off but whatever he had planned, was about to be unplanned.

Four hours later Dazza's truck pulled up at the Burnett Heads Marina. Armed with a diagnostic computer, he headed straight for the starboard donk of TAPB.

Gotcha!

The electronic control module, which is a flash way of saying the engine's brain, had died. Unbelievable. Never heard of this happening before. Never.

Never say never.

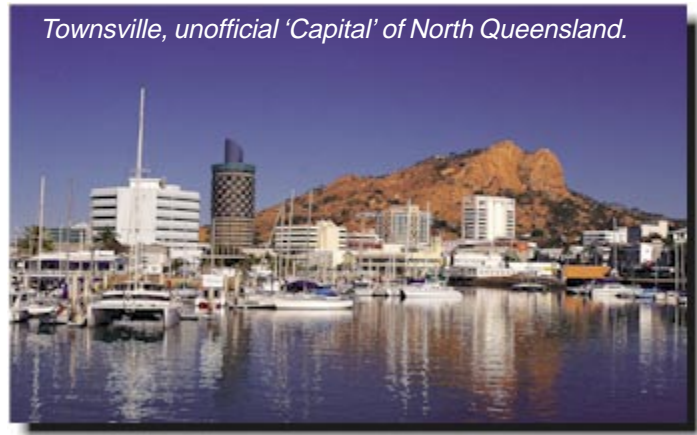
Needless to say, such a part isn't stocked by anyone. Why would you stock a brain which never fails?

But Dazza had a plan. He knew there were several brand new Cat 3116 donks lined up at the Riviera plant



waiting to be dropped into Riviera 48s.

Older readers who once owned cars such as the FJ will fondly remember that to keep them running often meant acquiring (read scavenging) a replacement part from unlikely sources but never, ever from one as likely as the production line at Fisherman's Bend. But then, the FJ really didn't have much in the way of a brain.



Townsville, unofficial 'Capital' of North Queensland.

So Dazza headed back down the coast on the five hour run to the Riviera plant where he met up with Craig to scavenge the fixings for a brain transplant.

Sunday. Another five hour drive north and by 10.30am Dazza was in the engine room of TAPB performing miracles. By noon, surgery was complete and everything was humming. TAPB had been given a clean bill of health and was ready to head off once more.

Might just quote Richard here.

His description of Dazza reads "... the most dedicated, helpful ambassador of goodwill from any company I have worked with in this industry in thirty years".

Take a bow, mate.

With a new brain on board, TAPB set off once more, destination Roslyn Bay which is beside the beachside holiday town of Yeppoon and some 322 miles from the Broadwater.

The mooring facilities at Roslyn Bay consisted of a fuel dock, the length of which was somewhat shorter than that of TAPB. The mooring facilities at Roslyn Bay consisted of a fuel dock, the length of which was somewhat shorter than that of TAPB.

A couple of carefully tied spring lines, a monetary exchange for some local seafood and all on board settled back for their first night on what is deemed the Coral Sea.

Roslyn Bay could never be described as the epicentre of activity so a 6.00am urgent knocking on the door was definitely worthy of investigation. Turned out to be the Dockmaster with the news that a large fishing trawler was on its way in to re-fuel and being tied up to the fuel wharf was not a sensible idea. Thanks for dropping in.

Things get a bit exotic now because Captain Geoff has decided they should visit Middle Percy Island.

The Percy group was discovered by Matty Flinders way back in 1802 and for cruising yachties, Middle Percy has become something of a don't miss it stopover.

It is almost due east of Koumala which is south of Mackay and most maps don't even show it.

Apart from the incredible natural beauty, the main feature on the island is a large rambling shack dubbed Eagle's Nest which has sort of evolved since the early sixties along with a tradition that visiting yachties leave something from their yacht and, if necessary, take something of the accumulation which they may need.

There is also a lagoon just waiting to be swum in which is exactly what our adventurers did.

Now there is a "set in cement" rule for when wandering around the edge of coral islands and that is "wear something on the feet". So Richard, having left his sandals back on TAPB, proceeded to stand on an unsuspecting oyster.

Tea tree oil is one of nature's finest healing substances, being both soothing and beneficial. Liquid chlorine is the exact opposite but it will kill any nasties in an open wound. It is also an excellent indicator of extreme pain tolerance, usually measured in the volume of screams coming from the injured.

When treating something as potentially infectious as a wound from an oyster, the story is to get lots of chlorine into the cut after which comes the soothing tea tree oil. Apparently Richard could even be heard on the mainland as his foot was being disinfected. And that was just an encounter with a bloody oyster. I just hope this bloke doesn't encounter any of our proper nasties. Safely back on board TAPB, Captain Geoff decided fish should be on the dinner table so he brought out the fly rods and bread. Uhm, fly rods and bread ???

Fear not, dear reader. What the good captain had in mind were garfish of about 9 to 12 inches in length. The warm waters up north team with them and, lightly dusted and deep fried, they make delicious eating. But they won't take a marlin lure.

He did set one "big fish pole" just for the hell of it and, according to the diary, some monster from the deep fanged onto it, dragged out most of the line, brought it all back, bit through it and disappeared. Not that it had ever appeared before it disappeared but you get the idea.

Whatever it was must have put the heebies up the garfish because only six of the little buggers fell for the bread temptation so Trish, the galley salve, re-wrote the menu to feature wild duck. Doesn't say what bait they used to catch that.

At 7.30am crack of dawn and TAPB was again under way once more, this time through the Cumberland Islands to that totally incongruous centrepiece of The Whitsundays, Hamilton Island.

A couple of hours taking it all in (and there's a lot to take), trying to figure out what the original objective was (if indeed one even existed) and finally concluding that Keef's Utopia wasn't for them, our crew headed north to an anchorage at Cape Gloucester, surely one of the most beautiful bits on the entire coast. Pick dropped. Two lines out. Bang bang. A couple of 20lb trevally which were released for a second life.

Ever onward, this time to Townsville, unofficial capital of North Queensland and the perfect place to re-stock the galley. Juiced up, TAPB was off again, destination Dunk Island resort, a very long 183 miles from Cape Gloucester, considering the shopping stop. By 7.00pm TAPB was securely tied up at Dunk.

The penultimate day. A genuine crack of dawn start, a run out to the reef for a bit of a fish and finally to an anchorage at Fitzroy Island, just around the corner from Cairns.

For reasons unknown, next morning everyone on board was up and at it at 5.30am. No one gets up at 5.30am on Fitzroy Island. Finally, four hours later, after realising the error of their ways, TAPB headed out to the fishing grounds, caught a token wahoo and at 3.30pm turned for Cairns.

On board it was all activity. Captain Geoff was organising the fishing gear for the run to Lizard Island. Galley slave Trish was cleaning out the kitchen in anticipation of the same thing. Sandy was capturing everything on video while Richard was packing and booking a 4.00am wake-up call. Hang on, that's not even pre-first light! Has he gone troppo so soon? Nah. Gotta catch the next morning's first flight to Sydney and then another across the Pacific to downtown Alameda, California.

Needless to say, the general consensus was that Richard had definitely drawn the short straw, especially since the delivery journey had only just begun.

Post script: The trio most certainly made it to Lizard Island in time for three days of the week long game fishing tournament. Sandy caught three marlin in one day which secured her second place in the competition.

She also caught two blue marlin which apparently is as rare as finding molars in a chook.

And a final Postscript and this time I'll quote exactly from my last e-mail from Sandy:

"John: Just returned home this a.m. from Australia. I had a wonderful trip.

"In reply to your question: Yes, Riviera has changed my life. I am living my dream. It has enabled me to travel safely to another country, sightsee and fish with complete confidence and safety with expert crew people and knowledgeable fishing experts. When I travelled to the Caribbean and wanted to go fishing, the guys were always hitting on me for dates, even the captains of the boats. I had had enough of that harassment. The Aussies speak English; when I travelled to Mexico, they had the advantage with the language and I did not trust the people there. I love the honesty and "right up front" attitude of the Australian people. I can't wait to go back."

Cheers, Sandy C.

