

IF YOU'RE like me, at some point in your life you've fantasised about buying a truly seaworthy boat and setting sail for the other side of the world. Sadly, few of us ever realise that dream – unless you join the Navy.

The closest I've come was when I met Larry and Bev Mosser in 1993 on the island of Borneo. Larry, a retired airline pilot, bought a 56ft Tayana sailboat built in Taiwan and had recently picked it up from the shipyard. He and Bev had sailed from Taipei to the island of Borneo in the South China Sea where they were enjoying their lifelong dream.

The Camel Trophy was being held in Malaysia that year and I was on hand for the start at the Tanjung Aru Hotel in Kota Kinabalu on the Malaysia part of Borneo. As the convoy of Discoverys took off I noticed two people in the crowd waving a small American flag and went over to see who they were.

Larry explained that he and Bev were exploring the Camel campground when they discovered there was an American team

RELIVING THE GREAT DIVIDE

Land Rover's longtime public relations chief in North America, Bill Baker looks back at the company's Great Divide Expedition 20 years later



by Bill Baker

Below right, from top: The interior of the Dormobile has an upper level sleeping platform; Expedition Exchange showed a custom built tray for a Land Rover filled with essential kit.

among the 20 nations. He pointed offshore to their moored sailboat and explained that he and Bev were just starting what would turn out to be a decade-long journey to a lot of places you've heard of but many more that you haven't.

I envied them and their lifestyle and read their letters and e-mails with great interest over the next few years. They told of how they would immerse themselves amongst the people on the islands and countries they visited; sometimes for months at a time. They would offer to teach English

or help with a community project, and then they would report on their experiences for their daughter's 5th grade class back in Michigan. All in all, a very rewarding experience.

I have to admit though that when Larry talked about making passages for thousands of miles without seeing land, trying to fix his water desaliniser, having a mast break, worrying about pirates and always keeping an eye on weather charts looking out for typhoons or hurricanes, my confidence that my wife and I could do the same thing quickly faded.

don't sail, drive!

But then you don't necessarily have to use a boat to explore exotic places and live with people from other cultures. With the right vehicle and preparation you can see the world by land and take your living quarters along with you. Such travel is called 'overlanding' by the hardy band of people who gathered in Prescott Valley, AZ recently to see expedition-prepared vehicles, attend



Clockwise from left: The author revisits one of the three remaining Great Divide Range Rovers which was on display at the famous Pebble Beach Concours d'elegance last year; The Unimog-based GlobalXpedition vehicle sells for a cool \$368,000; Monica Wescott of the Turtle Expedition answers questions about her travels over the past 30 years; Overland Journal sign and a loaner Land Rover Dormobile from Guatemala; Overlander en route to Alaska from Ushuaia, Argentina in the parking lot of the Expo; New XP Camper debuts at Overland Expo.





Tom Collins took two years to lay out the Great Divide Expedition which was a life-changing event for him.



lectures by well-travelled experts in the field and to see a wide variety of purpose-designed equipment, campers, trailers and rooftop Hiltons.

Overland Expo 2009 was sponsored by Sportsmobile, Four-Wheel Campers, Expedition Exchange, Equipt Expedition Outfitters, and Overland Journal, a

wagons for lighter-duty travel.

Then there were vehicles suitable for travelling to the middle of Siberia or the Sahara and simply staying there, such as the one built by GlobalXpedition. Based on a German Unimog truck chassis, this monster, at \$368,000 and nearly 13 tons is to off-roading travel as the

Based on a German Unimog truck chassis, this monster, at \$368,000 and nearly 13 tons is to off-roading travel as the space shuttle is to hang gliding.

space shuttle is to hang gliding. I wasn't exactly sure what the difference is between overlanding and an expedition so I checked with Wikipedia. They say an expedition is: "A journey undertaken for a specific purpose, usually exploration and research; while overlanding sees the journey as the purpose."

Wikipedia went on to say that the Camel Trophy adventures to far-off exotic lands from 1980-

2000 contributed to the growth of overlanding. Certainly the Camel Trophy was highly instrumental in building awareness for the Land Rover brand and associating it with adventure and some pretty tough characters.

One such character is Tom Collins who was one of the instructors at Overland Expo. He was on hand to talk about vehicle recovery techniques, preparation, off-road driving skills, even cross-country motorcycle riding.

Above left: Kristy Taylor in the Overland Training booth, with director Graham Jackson and Connie Rodman's 110 Defender.

Forward Control fire truck restored by Land Rover Las Vegas and used at their events.

Below: The steering wheel looks as big as a wagon wheel in the Forward Control.

I first met Tom and his Camel Trophy US teammate Don Floyd in 1987 after they returned from Madagascar. They had slogged around in the steamy jungles of that African island in a Tdi powered Range Rover, coming in second overall. We were just getting the brand and the product launched in the US and I knew their stories and the vehicle would help us at Land Rover build media interest.

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stay as close to the Divide and off-pavement as much as possible. We would cross it 15 times while passing through seven national forests, ghost towns, abandoned silver, gold and lead mines and across 32 high-altitude passes ranging from 7,000 to more than 13,000 feet.

Thirty-one journalists from around the world took part over three weeks in August, 1989. For many, it was a seminal event in their lives because of the breathtaking scenery (literally and figuratively) and because for most of them it was their first off-road driving experience.

are still open, but many are in much rougher shape due to increased use by the ever-expanding fleet of SUVs that roam our public lands. Some of the roads have been closed for repair or because there isn't the manpower to patrol them.

For Tom, the GDE led to a career teaching off-road driving not only for Land Rover but for other manufacturers. He also has co-hosted a TV show and is a contributor to off-road magazines.

Cliff Blake got *Tread Lightly!* established in the private sector then retired to Montana. Nearly every 4WD manufacturer is a corporate supporter of *Tread Lightly!* as are many magazines and thousands of 4WD club members.

I'm proud to have served as a Board member and in recent years have touted the organization's goals in my TV series, *Ride to Adventure* on the Outdoor Channel.

All in all, in this 20th anniversary year, it's nice to see that Land Rover events, and in particular the Great Divide Expedition, have contributed positively to environmental awareness as well generating a desire to see more of the world we live in.

worthy expedition

The Expedition was filmed and shown on ESPN, resulting in extraordinary media coverage. The reputation of Range Rover was firmly established as a company willing and able to put its products in the most demanding situations. The image of Range Rover being the one vehicle that is a worthy link between life and a long-walk home, was sealed. Comments like, "Is this thing really worth all that money?" were met with "Damn right".

In the 20 years since, Tom says most of the trails and roads we used

Top: Unimogs from T-Lo's Ultimate Off-Road in Prescott.

Above: This 110 made the fabled run from London to Cape Town.

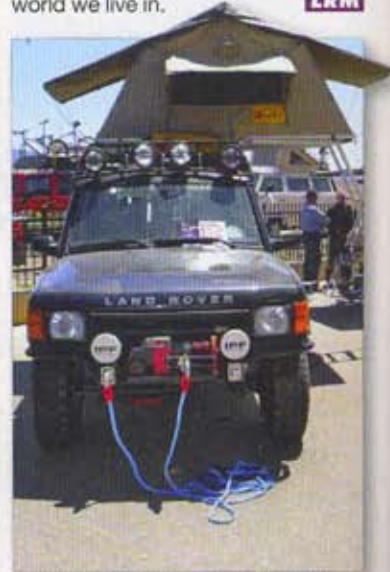
Below: Viking Off-Road's handsome Land Rover Discovery showing the latest recovery gear available from winchline.com.

During our discussions about things we could do together Tom said he wanted to develop an event that would drive along the spine of the Rockies, the Continental Divide, off-road, from Wyoming to New Mexico using old mining and logging roads.

Since we would be introducing an updated version of the Range Rover in 1989 that would have a more powerful engine, the first four-wheel, four-channel ABS in an SUV and the first viscous coupled, two-speed chain driven transfer case, we had to come up with something unique to show off its new capabilities. "The Great Divide Expedition" was the answer.

I had been talking to Cliff Blake of the US Forest Service in Washington DC about how we might use Forest Service roads and trails. Cliff headed up a programme called *Tread Lightly!* that promoted safe, environmentally responsible use of the forests by any mechanised vehicle. Cliff was getting ready to retire and wanted to take the programme with him into the private sector. It worked to our benefit to use *Tread Lightly!* as our environmental cause for the event.

The Great Divide Expedition would stretch some 1,200 miles from its trail head near Encampment, Wyoming to the finish near Chama, New Mexico. Our objective was to



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