

THE RIVA GRILL STORY

Every year, more and more people from around the world, travel to Lake Tahoe for its idyllic views, glacially-created waters and pristine forests, its motivated and bustling townships, magnificent winter and summer sports, fine dining and entertainment. What a sight. What a splendid resort destination!

By word-of-mouth, or happenstance, Tahoe has been frequented since the mid-1800's when Captain John C. Fremont and Kit Carson were in the "neighborhood" searching for a new path to The Pacific. Settlers, now tourists and residents, have been coming to America's largest Alpine lake ever since.

And Tahoe has become a great on-the-water playground for Riva runabouts. Apart from other familiar wooden boat builders, like Gar Wood, Chris-Craft and Hackercraft, the Riva runabout - quite possibly - may best be characterized by the old saying "Old World Quality, New World Design". People are willing to part with good money for the art of boatmanship and the recognition won by Riva.

Riva was founded in 1860 by Pietro Riva on the Oglio River in Northern Italy. The company grew quickly and soon moved to its present location at Sarnico, on the shore of Lago d'Iseo in the Lake District north of Milan. The company's direction and success became one of international envy. Riva runabouts won countless "races" during the firm's infancy at the turn of the Century, gaining it a reputation for fast and well built boats. After World War II, the mahogany runabout began an era of elite speed-boating that would last to-this-day while Riva became a world leader for elegance and perfection of finish. After 1950, Signor Carlo Riva and his protégé Gino Gervasoni could deliver two Honduran mahogany speedboats a month at their boatyard on the Lake. The intrigue of these boats quickly spread from their environs to the Italian Riviera, then to the French Riviera and Monaco. By the '60's, fleets of Riva's were docked side-by-side in the holiday ports of the Mediterranean. These "precious mahogany sculptures" became the rage...the water borne conveyances for the elite, with powerful V8 engines, leather upholstery, sunbathing space over the engine compartment and, in some cases, two berths under the foredeck. Indeed, as their Italian sports car counterparts, they were delivered to oil sheiks, European millionaires... and soon to worldwide connoisseurs, including admirers at Lake Tahoe.

Riva opened its first United States showroom in 1964, about the time when Sierra Boat Company's Dick Clarke, then its general manager, recognized the potential marriage of the various Riva configurations with appreciative and awakening West Coast customers. From the rakish 18 foot "Florida" model to the 29' Super Aquarama designs (used within the Riva Grill logo), Riva developed a most impressive list of satisfied customers which, today, includes over three dozen handsome examples of each and every model: the 18' Florida, 21' Olympic, 22' Ariston, 28' Tritone, 27' Aquarama, 28' "Super" Aquarama and 29' "Special". With any "luck" you may see any or many of them plying the Lake's crystal blue waters at high season. Circe III, a 1977 21' "Olympic" regularly gets underway for shoreline cruises. La Sirena, a 1968 22' Ariston is also "out" a lot. On Tahoe's west shore, look for Nancy, a 1969 26' Aquarama, perhaps en route to Emerald Bay or other calm anchorages for an afternoon picnic or evening libations. The only "Tritone" model, and a real eye-catcher, is Water Buggy; as well as Capriccio, Ciao Tahoe and Sky Rocks.... each, too, are impressive examples of the Aquarama silhouette. In all, Tahoe is home to the largest concentration of Riva runabouts in North America. Should your travels permit, visit Sierra Boat Company at Carnelian Bay to marvel at the Italian mastery of mahogany. Just next door is Riva Grill's sister property, Gar Wood's Grill & Pier... another favorite "stop" for safe mooring and dining.

So, welcome to Riva Grill, Lake Tahoe's newest mark of restaurant excellence. Like it's namesake, the Riva runabout, everyone who is someone... as celebrities, heads of state and industrial magnates... enjoys such a treasure. Well, almost everyone. Many "yet known" are also Riva aficionados. Riva boats enjoy a most impressive clientele. Today, however, only twenty or so are built-to-order each year at a cost of 350,000,000 lira, or approximately \$200,000 USD. As well, over 3,000 now dot the globe. Tastefully done in European fashion, the Riva runabout has no equal. Among the most beautiful boats in the World, definitely amidst one of the most glamorous locales as Lake Tahoe, the Riva runabout is designed for the joy of the ride and little else. Now, please, enjoy the splendid setting of Riva Grill, fond remembrances and all that captures the nostalgia of Tahoe and the excitement of the vintage days when wooden boats were the rage. As they are at Riva Grill!

By Steven A. Lapkin (founding co-Chair, Tahoe Wooden Boat Week)