

Hooked



For a quarter-century, Jay Allen has been living, breathing, eating and sleeping Land Rover and off-road adventures.

There are Land Rover enthusiasts and there are Land Rover enthusiasts and then there is Jay Allen.

He takes Land Rover devotion to an entirely new state of Zen.

How much of a zealot is he? Well, consider these tell-tale signs:

- At his wedding, there was a designated parking area for Land Rovers only – as well as specially-made signs directing Land Rovers owners where to park.
- His first wedding picture outdoors was taken with a parade of 20 Land Rovers behind him and his bride, Trissa.
- Try to trip Allen up by asking him who

created Land Rover and he'll not only flash a confident grin and quickly tell you "The Wilkes Brothers – Spencer and Maurice," but he'll proceed to tell you their life's story as well as the Land Rover historical timeline since its inception in 1948.

- He has been working with Land Rovers for 25 years – basically, since his first full-time job.
- He has owned seven Land Rovers.
- He met his wife Trissa at a Land Rover dealer and proceeded to convert her into the off-road aficionada he is.
- He has ventured off-roading in one of his Land Rover's more than 250 times.



- On the back of Allen's Land Rover Discovery is a cover with the inscription "Solihull," which is the hallowed-ground birthplace of Land Rover in England – it is a sacred souvenir Trissa picked up during a pilgrimage to Land Rover's origin.

Just what is this unbridled attraction with Land Rover and how did it begin?

Allen ponders the question and says, "Land Rover has a very rich history and has proven time after time that it is the premier manufacturer of 4x4's in the world – bar none. Nothing even comes close. Not only do they make the best vehicles, but they do it with style, class and luxury.

"What other car can take you off-roading in the morning, have it covered in mud, wash it off later that afternoon and pull up to the Ritz Carlton that night and get parked out front in the pole position where everyone can admire its look and style. There's no other car you can do that with."

During a very brief period in the last quarter-century, Allen "lost his way": he defected from a Land Rover dealership (gasp!) when he was invited to join Greg Penske's

new Toyota store in Rancho Santa Margarita, Calif. But before you could rattle off the names of the most prominent Land Rover owners, like Paul McCartney and Michael Douglas, Allen rushed right back to Land Rover.

"I was so bored [at Toyota]," he says. "If you sit in a Camry, you fall asleep. Those are cars that take you from point A to point B. Basic boring transportation - that's all there is to it. There's nothing there.

"But when you sit in a Land Rover and see all the controls, features and road-condition management systems, you say, 'Damn, we're going places in this thing.'"

Allen caught Land Rover fever shortly after he left college when he landed his first full-time job at the age of 21 with Newport Imports in Newport Beach, Calif., which features Ferrari, Jaguar and Aston Martin.

"I loved it," Allen says. "Show me a 21-year-old guy who doesn't love Ferraris, Jaguars and Aston Martins. I was in a candy store."



Then one day soon thereafter it all changed: Allen's boss walked in and announced, "Guess what? We're going to become a Land Rover store."

Little did Allen know his life was about to change forever.

To get more familiar with Land Rover, he watched a video of the legendary Camel Trophy competition, considered the Olympics of the four-wheel drive world.

Minutes into the video, "I was hooked," he says.

He watched with wonder, intrigue and amazement as Land Rovers hurdled, dipped and navigated the world's toughest and deepest terrain in exotic locations like Madagascar, Malaysia and Mongolia.

"Land Rover took off-roading to new extremes with deep water crossings and excursions in jungles – really crazy stuff," Allen says. "I was amazed."

At that moment, he told himself, "This is what I want to do – drive Land Rovers, work with them, and learn everything I could about them."

Ironically, it was that same video that Trissa watched 10 years later that got her "hooked" on Land Rover as well.

"I wasn't familiar with Land Rovers until I saw the video," she says. "I was astounded watching the vehicle in such extreme conditions in Africa and going through deep mud in Sabah, Indonesia."

"I was like, 'Oh my gosh -- I want that car.'"

Shortly after seeing the Camel Trophy video, Allen experienced his first off-road adventure in Wildomar, Calif. If the video hadn't hooked him, the off-road event certainly would have. He was captivated.

"Land Rovers are defined by refined luxury combined with unparalleled off-road four-wheel drive capability and performance," he says. "Everything I saw in the Camel Trophy video reinforced my passion for the brand. It was definitely the right fit for me and my life-style."

"I decided that day that my next car – and every car thereafter -- would be a Land Rover."

After several years at Newport Imports, Allen decided he wanted to "experience the rural life" that he was familiar with in his pre-teen years. So he moved to Westford, Vermont, which, like his birthplace, Pound Ridge, New York, has no stop lights.

The scenery around him changed dramatically but one thing remained the same – Land Rover. Allen not only bought his first Land Rover there but also landed a job at Rovers North, which offers an entire range of genuine Land Rover parts direct from Land Rover UK. They were also publishers of North America's largest Land Rover publication, Rovers Magazine.

"I wanted to experience rural life again -- and boy did I ever get it," Allen says with a laugh. "In Westford, you start the day off at 25 degrees below zero and work your way up to a high of one degree."

He didn't stay there very long, swapping his thermals and wind-blocking winter coats for shorts and a Polo shirt as he returned to his old job at Newport Imports. That didn't last long either as he caught wind of the first stand alone Land Rover dealership under construction in Mission Viejo, Calif. With Allen's experience, knowledge and passion for the brand, he was immediately hired. Two years later, Land Rover Newport Beach opened and Allen moved over there, taking on his first

managerial position.

He remained there for eight years – 1996-2004 – as the head of the parts department.

It was there that Allen met his future wife, Trissa, on a splendid Saturday morning in 1998. They now have a young son, Corbin, with whom they spend many family weekends off-roading in the rugged Anza-Borrego Desert at the doorstep of the dazzling foothills of San Diego County's Santa Rosa Mountains.

The rough, dusty and rocky trails of the world-famous Anza-Borrego desert form a dazzling, sprawling canvas where Allen feels the jaw-dropping proficiency and visceral excitement of his vehicle in an authentic, rustic Old West environment.

“Hands down, this is our favorite place to ride,” he says. “The scenery is unparalleled.”

Allen plans all Land Rover off-road excursions for his employer, Land Rover Anaheim Hills. Well, he doesn't just plan the adventure. He turns it into an unforgettable exploration that family, friends and acquaintances can't wait to experience again and again.

“Jay's undying passion with Land Rover is unrivaled,” says Ho Chung, who has been off-roading with Allen since 1994. “I used to be at the top of that list. But I lost my spot to Jay. There is no one more passionate and knowledgeable about Land Rovers and off-roading.”

Allen's definition of off-roading is unlike that of most people. He doesn't just go for the sake of off-roading or going out for a simple adventure. He takes it to the next level.

“We'll be out there at night around a campfire and Jay will say, ‘OK, let's go explore’ and that's when the adventure really begins,”



Chung says. “That's one of great things about Jay. He taught me you don't need a route or destination. You just go out and have fun and explore.”

Allen transforms the entire scope of the experience – even when it comes to cooking. “He's so generous,” Chung says. “With Jay, you don't eat frank and beans. Try Jamaican style seafood. He goes all out. And he cooks it himself – gourmet style. And he doesn't want anything in return. He shares the love.”

Once, Chung was stuck in the Utah wilderness on an off-road venture. He called Allen at 10 p.m., informing him that a warning light had come on in his Land Rover.

“You need a sensor,” Allen immediately told him. “What's your address? I'll FedEx it to you in the morning.”

“That's what kind of guy Jay is,” Chung says. “We call him Dr. Jay.”

Says Allen: “My best friends and the relationships I have kept the longest are all related to Land Rover. When you go on an off-road adventure, and especially if you get into trouble with your car or while exploring, there is a

bond that happens between people. I've made lifelong friends due to Land Rover and the fellowship of the Land Rover community."

Allen was a born outdoorsman – from Day 1. When you're from Pound Ridge, New York, well, you almost have no other choice. With a population of 5,000, Pound Ridge has no hospitals, one elementary school, one high school and 16 police officers. "It's just acres and acres of wilderness," Allen



says.

It was easy to go outside "and find places to get lost," he says. "That's what I did."

While some kids were out playing baseball, football and basketball, Allen was out in the woods and swamps, chasing snakes and turtles, building tree houses and throwing dirt clods with his friends.

"I loved it," he says. "It's very much in my DNA to go off and explore."

In Pound Ridge, "you had to create your own fun," he says. "I'd come home from school and in seconds I'd be outside, going off to the woods and rocks."

Suddenly, one day in Pound Ridge, at the age of 13, Allen's life changed forever. He re-

ceived startling news from his father: his dad had accepted a new job, requiring the family to move out West ... to Palos Verdes, Calif., an affluent community known for its dramatic ocean and city views, distinguished schools and extensive horse trails.

"It was a 180-degree change," Allen says. "It was as different as you can get without moving to a foreign country. I went from the solitude of the woods to join a bunch of surf rats who called me 'dude'."

He couldn't have been more excited – unless, of course, he was moving into a cabin deep in the woods.

"Moving from a town with no stop lights to suburban Los Angeles, I was like, 'Right on,'" he says. "I was hoping to be in the next Van Halen video."

Even though the surf was outside the back door, what did Allen do upon arriving to California? He mapped out the nearest deserts – Mojave, Anza and Joshua Tree.

"There weren't many places to 'get lost' in Palos Verdes, so I found the closest ones," he says.

Every month, Allen and his family would journey out to the desert ... to explore, to enjoy, and to experience nature.

When Jay turned 16, he started going off by himself or with his group of friends, and his fascination with off-roading and exploring continued to grow.

When Allen graduated from high school, he decided to pursue radio broadcasting in college.

"Everyone said I had a good radio voice," he says – and even today he has the quintessential announcer's voice. He was heavily into music

– alternative music. Not Beatles, Rolling Stones, Bruce Springsteen and U2. No – try Dinosaur Jr., Bob Marley, Black Flag and John Coltrane, to name a few. He envisioned becoming a DJ and went off to Northern Arizona University, where he majored in broadcasting.

“I learned a lot about the radio and broadcasting business -- I learned *not to be in it*,” he says with a laugh.

He learned that first-hand from his professors, who had second and third jobs when they worked as DJs.

“They said Rick Dees was the only guy in the radio business with job security,” Allen says.

So Allen ultimately left Arizona -- and with it, his dream of being in radio.

What was next? He wasn’t sure. Cars were his passion so he looked for opportunities there.

Enter Newport Imports in Newport Beach, Calif., Land Rover ... and Trissa.

It’s certainly no surprise that Allen met his wife at a Land Rover dealership. It would have been surprising *if he hadn’t*.

Allen had no business being at the dealership on that Saturday. It was his day off. But he had to catch up on paperwork before heading out to the desert.

As fate would have it, there was Allen, behind the counter in the parts department, when he spotted Trissa. She was easy to notice as she walked toward him – with her genuine beauty, seductive smile and outgoing personality. He fell into a trance.

“I had become such a huge Land Rover geek that I had to get a few things with Land Rover logos on them,” she says with a laugh.

She approached Allen with her request. Happily, he grabbed a t-shirt for her from his office, went back to the counter, handed it her and talked to her for a while. He repeated this sequence, grabbing a different item each time – a coffee cup here, a key chain there. It was his way of keeping Trissa there for as long as he could.

“I wondered, ‘Why is he taking his sweet old time getting one item at a time,’ Trissa says with a laugh. “I had no idea he was attracted to me. I was totally oblivious.”

After Allen finally let Trissa leave with a sack full of Land Rover paraphernalia, he was left with a flushed look on his face.

“Jay, what’s wrong with you?” one of Allen’s colleagues asked.

“My knees buckled,” Allen would later say.

Allen’s next move was inviting Trissa to an off-road event, which is where they bonded – then and to this day. Now it’s the Allen Three-some – Jay, Trissa and their son Corbin – who go off-roading.

It’s their entertainment, their break from the rat race of the Monday-Friday 9-5 world.

“It’s our getaway,” he says. “We’re in our element and so is our Land Rover. It’s in our DNA.”

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