

ROVER SPREADS HAPPINESS...

by Patrick Coyne

It's a family joke in the Coyne clan that when we drive out and about in the Rover we spread happiness wherever we go. The saying went: 'Look at the people smiling - they're pleased when they see us... So, we make them happy!' Of course, you might get the cynical answer: 'They're not smiling, they're laughing!' Despite this, the light-hearted tradition goes on: the Rover spreads happiness...

And yet, you know, many a true word spoken... Rover clubs throughout the world share the subtle quality of being able to bring happily together people of many different types, ages, races, cultures, even social classes, with the same thread of interest, the same appreciation of the mysteriously successful style and great engineering qualities of Rover in all its varying models and years.

What an interesting make Rover is! There is a model for everybody. Farmers and bundu bashers will naturally gravitate towards the Land-Rover and Range Rover types. Dashing young bloods go for the P6 V8 variants, on account of their famed power to weight ratio, their fabulous road-holding - that famous floating ride - and their swept, going-fast-even-when-standing-still-look, yes, their timeless and dateless styling, which applies also to the 4 cyl models, of course. Upright, solid, successful, reliable and decent citizens go for the Great Aunt, the P5 six-cylinder saloon, with its luxury folding picnic tables and bedside lamps, its wide, four-at-a-pinch seats, its look of huge, expensive quality. The same citizens (above) who suddenly have a yen to let their hair down, might go for the P5B V8 coupe, with its more than a hint of sporty power and don't mention how many M.P.G. when I put my foot down, money no object, kind of atmosphere. Then we have the SD guys, those with a big family usually and a big garage, too. The air of silent, powerful quality with modern, classic, poor man's Maserati streamlining is nowhere better expressed in the Rover range than in the SD models, especially the V-8 models, though many swear by the sixes. The P2 and P3 owners are a tiny, exclusive bunch, and with good reason. Not quite vintage but definitely old-fashioned styling and road-holding, with sit up and beg seating, and that nonchalant, unique free-wheeling gait. Ah, yes, delectable in the six-cylinder versions.

But what of the P4 blokes? We'll leave them till last, because they deserve a paragraph all to themselves. The Aunty is the classic Rover, you'll surely agree. Just big enough to be a family saloon, yet compact enough to fit into a modest garage or parking space. Old-fashioned, yet classically intriguing styling - lipread the passengers in the passing cars: 'Is that a Rolls-Royce? No, a Rover!' And when I say 'passing', I include 'being passed'. Because the 2.6 litre Six is powerful enough (with perfectly chosen gear and final drive ratios) to show many modern tins a clean pair of 'Mary Poppins' type heels. Because, oh yes, I kid you not, Aunty

can pick up her skirts and fly! Many a driver of a modern warmed-up hatch has muttered imprecations on being passed going up Field's Hill by that – what's it? A Rover 100?? – dammit, must phone our agents, this car's a gutless wonder... P4-90 owners, sorry and all that, but it's the 100 and later model P4s that gave the car its surprising reputation. More crankshaft bearings for one thing. And then, P4 and overdrive go together like ham and eggs. Laycock de Normanville, we love you! What a 'fifth gear'! Whereas Other Makes such as Wolseleys have to make do with an O.D. called Borg Warner. Different street, my mate.

Talking about making people *pleased*, only Rover can please everybody. What other marque has such a variety of different models to suit all personalities? And how pleasing that this is British car-designing at its best. No, let's say rather – *English* car-making. It was in England that the car was planned, developed, and achieved. The St George's flag flying *over* the Stars and Stripes, just as in the world's navies when you capture a ship you fly the flag of the capturing nation over the flag of the captured nation. For Rover captured, took over some great American ideas like that beautiful, lightweight G.M. V-8 engine, and that radical-at-the-time Studebaker body style. But, of course, *improved* them, you know... And added some exquisitely English features such as figured walnut facia and window frames.

Only Rovers have that happy blend of true-blue engineering expertise and red-hot excitement. So it's fair to say: Happiness is... being a Rover Owner.

