



[TOP] A-1 Limousine's Princeton headquarters.
[RIGHT] Michael Starr supervises a new delivery of vehicles.

IN ADDITION TO diversifying their fleet, the Starrs have also prioritized innovation as a means to keep the company modernized and competitive. For some time now, A-1 has partnered with CarbonFund.org, one of the largest U.S.-based carbon offsetting companies, to create the Ride Silver Program. It is an optional program that essentially offsets the carbon used on a client's trip, rendering the entire trip carbon neutral. According to Jeff, more than 50 percent of their customers are now opting to participate in the Ride Silver Program. One of the other ways A-1 Limo is taking a "green initiative" is with its garage's heating system. "It's been about eight years now," says Jeff, "that our garage has been heated by waste oil, so it significantly cuts down the cost of heating by utilizing the waste oil that comes out of our vehicles."

Such creative innovations really indicate that we have entered a new era of the

luxury ground transportation industry, and it is clear that the Starrs are marking A-1 Limousine's milestone 50th anniversary by demonstrating that they plan on continuing to be leaders in this new era. With five decades of industry mileage comes a proportionate amount of know-how and grit, and with the company's second generation of family leadership now taking the reins, A-1 Limousine is poised to remain a fierce local and global competitor in the industry.

"I think the biggest challenge is that the east coast of the United States is probably the busiest as far as limousines, sedans and buses go," says Jeff. "There's a tremendous amount of competition, so you've always got to be on your feet, ready to compete."

You can learn more about A-1 Limousine at www.a1limo.com, and you can wish them a happy 50th anniversary on Twitter @A1_Limo. **ID**

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HIRE POWER: 3 Steps To Hiring the Right Employee

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Brush up on Your Options

A-1 Limousine

LIFE ON THE A-LIST
The Starr Family Business Reaches its 50-Year Milestone

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LIFE ON THE A-LIST

The Starr Family Business Reaches its 50-Year Milestone

by Adam Leitenberger

Last month marked A-1 Limousine's 50th year in the ground transportation business, and the company's father-son leadership team sure has a lot to celebrate. Theirs is a half century-long story of resilience and innovation, during which their company came to be a household name within the industry, and one of the top limousine services in the United States. Like any good success story, the saga of the Starr family business comes with some bumps in the road.

caught us and everybody else off guard. So we're now just starting to grow again, and hopefully there's nothing around the corner that will hit us in the head again. We have to try to climb back to, and hopefully surpass, where we were before the recession."

IN LIGHT OF THE PAST DECADE'S ECONOMIC CLIMATE, the Starrs have had to rethink the company's strategies and goals. "The short term goal," says Jeff, "is obviously growth, rebuilding and continuing to improve. Long term goals are to diversify our services to make us a little more recession proof."

"We have branched out and diversified," says Michael, "but the meat of the business is still the airport. I'd say that's probably more than 50 percent of the business." Although A-1 Limo continues to do a tremendous amount of corporate service, the team takes pride in their ability to "move large groups of people very efficiently and effectively" with their substantial bus fleet, which includes 22 full-size buses (56-passenger, 47-passenger, and 36-passenger), 16 vans and a number of shuttle buses. "For one of our clients," Michael recalls, "we moved over 7,000 people into and out of an event within a four hour period of time. We moved them in within a half an hour window, and then had everybody on the vehicles and out of the event in an hour. One of the largest moves we did was putting together a camp shuttle system event, and during the course of the event, we moved over 34,000 people in the course of four days."



Going Forward By Giving Back

A-1 LIMOUSINE DEMONSTRATES that you can't stay on top without giving back. A-1 is a proud and active member of the LANJ, the PRLA, the NLA, the American Bus Association. The company is also an active participant in many other travel-oriented associations related to its client base. The advantages of participating in industry associations, according to President and COO Jeff Starr, benefit everyone involved. "By being a part of these organizations," he says, "you're part of helping the industry self regulate, but when the government does need to be involved, you've got greater influence. It's a good thing to do because it promotes our industry in a positive light to governments, so we don't become over-regulated because they think we don't care."

In addition to its association involvement, A-1 Limo also works with a variety of charitable organizations, both local and national, including the American Diabetes Association, the Ronald McDonald House, and the Eden Institute, a local educational facility for children with autism. **ID**

About A-1 Worldwide

FOUNDED: 1964
LOCATION: Princeton, NJ
VEHICLES: Sedans, SUVs, Vans, Limousines, Shuttle Buses, Motorcoaches & Limo Buses
STAFF: Over 350 employees
PHONE: (800) 367-0070
WEB: www.a1limo.com



A-1 Limousine has grown from its humble beginnings with 4 cars into a diversified fleet of over 220 vehicles with 350 employees to satisfy all your ground transportation needs.



A-1 LIMOUSINE began with humble beginnings on March 1, 1964, with just four taxi cabs and two limousines in the university town of Princeton, New Jersey. Technically, the company has historical roots from around the turn of the 19th century, when it was a horse and buggy taxi service owned by Joseph E. Nutt and Son. Michael Starr and his wife, Marilyn, would eventually acquire and rename the business, and ever since, A-1 Limousine has been entirely owned and operated by the Starr family. Michael currently serves as the company's CEO, and his son, Jeffrey, who joined the company in 1985, has served as president and COO since 2004.

Local regulations would be one of the first obstacles the company would encounter in its early years, but by adapting to overcome this initial challenge, the company was set on course to become the global limousine service it is today. "In Princeton," Michael recalls, "you couldn't expand a taxi cab business. There have been 28 licenses since they started with taxi cab regulations, so you couldn't add any unless you bought somebody out." Because A-1 was already more of a limousine and sedan business at this early point in its history, the company made its final exit from the taxi cab industry in 1971. "We moved out to Route 1 in West Windsor Township, and that's where we've been ever since," says Michael. The company has also since seen the addition of an independent and fully operational second location in Whitehall Township, a suburb of Allentown, Pennsylvania, with its own dispatch and maintenance centers.

Also in that game-changing year of 1971, A-1 Limousine first adopted its official tagline, "For People Going

Places," which continues to define the company's brand identity and mission to this day. Although they could not have foreseen it back in the 1970s, this slogan would later come to be utilized as the official name of A-1 Limousine's worldwide affiliate network, as well as its associated global travel information website.

"We have two different programs that work off of FPGP.com," says Jeff, "the travel information website and our affiliate network." The website functions essentially as a hub for clients seeking worldwide ground transportation and international travel information.

The affiliate network has flourished into a large but exclusive global organization of carefully selected partners. "We use fully qualified services," Jeffrey explains, "so in order to be a part of our network, they need to apply, and they need to provide us with information regarding vehicle types, the age of their vehicles, driver training programs, insurance, licensing, and things like that." In addition to carefully screening the fleets and operations of potential affiliates, A-1 Limousine also ensures that their affiliate partners prioritize safety and service. "Regardless of where they are in the world, we verify that they have what is required to be legal for operations in that part of the world. We also enforce quality control for each of those companies to make sure they resolve any issues with clients, and if

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Michael Starr (left) and his son Jeffrey pose in front of their diverse fleet.

they don't, then they're not part of the network anymore."

FPGP.COM IS ALSO THE HOME of an interactive blog, on which clients, partners and travelers can share their travel experiences or insight into a particular location. Additionally, it is home to the FPGP Travel Blog, a brand new marketing initiative that just debuted last month. A member of A-1 Limousine's in-house marketing staff, Rachel Branstrom, was recently announced as FPGP.com's designated travel blogger, and her focus in that role will be simply "writing great stories about interesting locations." You can read Rachel's inaugural post about traveling to Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, on the FPGP Travel Blog (www.fpgp.com/fpgp-travel-blog/).

"We're always doing different types of marketing," says Jeffrey, and in conjunction with their recent addition of a staff blogger, the marketing department at A-

1 Limo has big plans to ramp up their social media content in the coming months. "We're on social networks, but it's a limited amount of content we're putting on there, so we're looking to bring someone on full time to manage those outlets."

FPGP.com and the slogan that inspired it are emblematic of A-1 Limo's ability to balance timeless business values and familial tradition, with the adaptability and innovation required of a company that plans on staying in business for as long as this one has. On that note, while changes in operations and fleet composition are necessary for survival in this business, some things, like A-1 Limo's company culture and core values, never change—nor should they.

"The culture here can be described in one word," says Jeff, "and that's 'family.' My parents started the company, I've been here since 1985, and two of my children work here part time while going



to school. Within our organization, we have several father/child and husband/wife teams that work for us. We just have a very family-oriented company and mentality. The company was started as a family business, and even though we have over 300 employees, it's still treated as a family business. We look at our employees as part of our extended family. All of our drivers are employees, and the company owns and maintains all of the equipment. We don't use any owner/operators or independent contractors, and we haven't used any since the company started."

It is presumably this consistent "family-oriented mentality" that enabled the Starrs and their extended A-1 Limo family to overcome the most daunting challenges they have had to face in their company's 50 year history: the unavoidable setbacks, shared by many companies, stemming from the challenging

economic conditions we have seen since the early 2000s.

"Before the recession," says Michael, "we had over 300 vehicles. Now we're at about 230 vehicles currently." The economic downturn forced A-1 Limo, like countless other businesses, to cut back. In addition to having a much larger fleet, leading up to 2001 the company also had 350 full time employees and 200 part time employees. Pre-2001, Michael recalls business reaching heights upwards of 600 jobs per day. Post-2001, business had dropped to lows of five jobs per day. "It was a tremendous impact, like it was for everybody in this area. Then the other two recessions

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