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Family Company Keeps Business Going Strong for More than 50 Years

What's their secret? A life-long commitment to delivering the best service in town

By Camella Lobo

In an industry where most companies are looking to grow larger and at a rapid pace, Bob Levine of Hy's Livery in West Haven, Conn., is satisfied with the size of the business he and his family have worked to slowly build for 56 years. "I would be happy if things here would remain status quo," says Levine. "We have a nice book of business and do a good volume."

Life is Good

With more than 50 limousines and hearses, Levine says that while every other company is concerned with growth, he's thinking, "Why rock the boat?" This certainly doesn't mean that Hy's isn't concerned with being the best ground transportation company in its region. That, says Levine, is one of the company's

Number One goals. "Luxury travel is about looking for something above mediocrity," he says.

The company does about 25% of its business in the funeral market and roughly 70% in the corporate market. The rest of Hy's business is concentrated in the retail market, although Levine says the company doesn't do any "night on the town" type of work. "I know the average guy in the business doesn't think about staying small," says Levine, "but we aren't struggling by any means, and we're happy with our clientele."

Keep it in the Family

Levine hasn't always been focused on slow growth. After he came into the business right out of college, he worked with his father, Hyman, to grow the company to the size it is today. "I took something that was relatively small and made it into something large," says Levine. He drove the limousines as well, right up until the point when his father passed away.

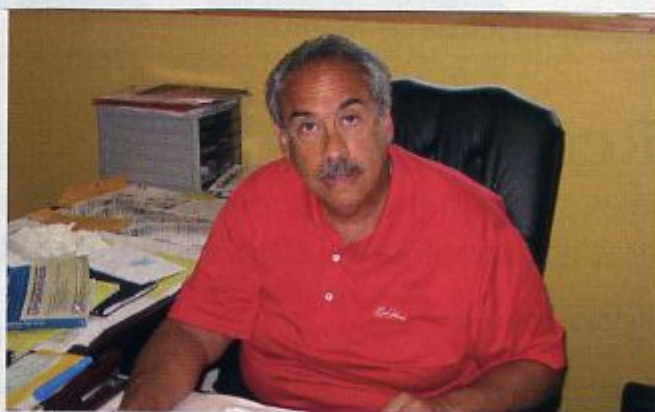
In time, Levine hopes that one of his children will step into his shoes and carry the company further, just as he did 35 years ago. He and his wife Shelley are trying to get one of their four children — Matt and Eric, 27, Lauren, 23, and Alex, 21 — to get into the business very soon. "They are all out there, exploring what the world has to offer right now," he says. "The only thing we hope is that they de-

a unique history



During World War II, the country was asked by the government to come together and donate rubber and metal toward the war effort. All over the U.S., everything went — tires, sheet metal, bumpers, etc. The Jacksons, a wealthy family that owned the *Haven Register*, also owned a '39 Packard limousine, which they had up on cinder blocks after donating its tires during that time.

Once the war was over, instead of putting it back on the road themselves, the Jacksons asked Hyman, who worked for the *Register*, if he was interested in purchasing the limousine. There began Hy's Livery. Initially, the company did most of its business in local weddings and funeral work, but soon grew to find its own balance in the Connecticut market. "We have been here long enough that our name is definitely out there," says Levine.



Bob Levine hopes that someday one, or perhaps all three, of his children will take over the business.

cide that they want to have a future here. That is a possibility."

The Flip Side

Although Levine says he loves the business and especially the people in the industry, like most operators, he struggles with his personal time. "You're constantly trying to balance the two most important things in your life — your business and your family," he says, "and the business doesn't wait and the problems only multiply the larger you get." What has kept him in the business so long are the relationships he has formed with people along the way. "We have an exceptionally diverse group," he says. "As similar as everyone is, we are all so different." **LCT**

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