

Increase your business by linking to your community – pg. 62

OCTOBER 2003

www.limodigest.com

Limousine

D I G E S T

HVS
LIVERY
SERVICE

October 2003 Vol. 13 No. 10 \$4.95

"The Voice of the Luxury Ground Transportation Industry"

The Professional Funeral Operator

*How to Approach Funeral Directors
Is Your Fleet Suitable for Funerals?
The Latest Vehicles Available*

2003 Show Preview

Critical Seminars • Cadillac Unveils Armored DeVille • Key Figures at Industry Summit

LIMOUSINE DIGEST

VOL. 13, NO. 10

Hy's Livery Service, Inc.

Excels at providing transportation to the funeral industry

For over 50 years, Hy's Livery Service, Inc. has been providing livery service to funeral homes in Connecticut. The company has seen a lot of change since they opened the garage doors in 1952, but its commitment to providing outstanding service has remained a guiding principle. It has been this unwavering focus and dedication to quality — quality people and quality products — that has enabled Hy's to grow, prosper, and become one of the nation's largest and most successful livery operations.

Robert Levine joined Hy's Livery, a company started by his father, in 1973 after graduating from Northeastern University in Boston and has been the full-time owner and president since 1982. He has guided the company's growth from a ten-limousine operation to its present size of 100 vehicles, in two Connecticut cities.

"In the 50s and 60s, most of the funeral homes in this area had their own equipment," said Levine. "We entered this segment of the market by picking up the overflow work at funeral homes and have grown our business from there." Today Hy's provides livery service to over 100 funeral homes and makes over 12,000 funeral runs per year using a fleet of Cadillac hearses and Cadillac six-door limousines.

"The funeral home of today is looking for new, well-maintained, professional vehicles. Black is the most prevalent color and Cadillac funeral coaches and matching six-door limousines are, and historically have been, the vehicles that funeral directors prefer," noted Levine. White 100-inch or 120-inch stretches with wraparound J-seating present a problem for many elderly people and do not lend themselves to the needs of the funeral industry.

Another important factor that limousine operators need to know before expanding into the funeral industry is the major role a chauffeur plays in the actual funeral service. Obviously the chauffeur must be knowledgeable of the intricate details of each funeral home's operation, and they must be familiar with the location of every cemetery. Funeral directors also look for drivers that portray a conservative and professional image. "The funeral home usually prefers older individuals, who have a more mature presentation," said Levine. "We find that hiring retired or semi-retired people for chauffeurs works best."

While corporate businesses may come and go, the funeral industry is known for being nearly recession-proof. "Providing livery service to funeral homes has been a very stable and profitable business," said Levine. "Over 80 percent of our Cadillac hearses and Cadillac six-door limousines are rented out each day." Funeral traditions vary regionally across the nation, but in New England funerals take place six days a week, and the typical service utilizes a hearse and two six-door limousines. Maximizing the utility of these specialty vehicles is the key to profitability in this business.

Hy's growth over the years has taken place by picking up new funeral accounts as well as by acquiring other livery operations in strategic locations. "Fortunately, Hy's has a good reputation in our market. When it is time for a funeral director to replace their fleet they know we're here, and it may be less expensive to use a livery service than to buy new," he noted.

"My advice to the livery company looking to expand into this particular market is to fully understand the opportunities in your area and have a handle on all associated costs," commented Levine. "Talk to the funeral directors in your area. Find out as much information as possible about their fleets." This includes, but is not limited to, the number of coaches and six-door limousines that they own, the model year of each vehicle, and the color of their fleet. Additionally, it is beneficial to know if they are an independent or part of a conglomerate, and if they share vehicles with other funeral homes.

Your decision to enter and your ability to make money in this market will be greatly rewarded when you are armed with information, committed to providing impeccable service and dedicated to meeting the needs of your clients.

Hy's Livery Service, Inc.'s corporate office is located in West Haven, Conn., with a second location in New Britain, Conn. **LD**

