

Stout's Bus Service Grows... Stout's Charter Is BORN!

Harry - a.k.a. Shane, was pushing his parent's school bus company to new heights with extra-curricular trips. He was adding revenue, not overhead, which powerfully displayed his natural "business man" abilities, yet his gut feelings yearned for more.

And Then There Were Two

A part-time driver position at STARR gave Shane the training necessary to drive a motorcoach. Before long, his instincts led him to his father with the confirmation that his own business was what he needed to fulfill his dreams. Trepidation aside, his father supported the idea with a loan for \$20,000, which Shane used to buy two 1974 GMC 4905 coaches from STARR and Stout's Charter Service, Inc. was born, becoming one of only 1,500 motorcoach companies operating in the U.S. His dad went a step further, scouring the entire phone book to create a mailing list of potential clients, and the envelope stuffing began. Shane and his wife, Dena, invested countless hours in the business. Shane recalled an indispensable figure in the early days – Sidney Miles, the unsung hero who handled countless odd jobs. "Without him, Stout's wouldn't be where it is today," said Shane.

The company's first trip was a two-bus move to a Phillies game for St. James Church. Ironically, one of the buses cancelled. Harry reluctantly sent the second driver, Mark Case, home. At that moment he realized that his role as entrepreneur had transformed to leader. He would now, and for decades to come, control the welfare of those he employed. This awareness, along with attentiveness to the needs of customers, were invaluable factors to the rooted success of Stout's.

Stout's bought two more vehicles in 1984 and shortly after, traded one for another, and then another. The fleet was taking shape. However, it was 1986 when the Stout image embarked on a monumental transformation. Shane and Dena flew to Germany and toured the Kassbohrer factory, the manufacturer of SETRA, a European touring coach. The outside was vividly painted, making it livelier than the silver paneled American units. The vehicle kneeled, allowing easier boarding. The interior featured plush seats, arm and foot rests and panoramic views.

Below: Stout's first SETRA, European Touring Coach, purchased in 1986.



The sixth motorcoach added to the fleet would propel Stout's into a class of its own, for this type of vehicle was scarce among US operators. Adhering to his dad's favorite saying – "Columbus took a chance," Shane did the same with the new style coach and it paid off.

He eventually stopped driving to focus on the operations of the company, educating his staff about his passion for service and his drive to be the best.

...Stay tuned as we explore the 90's in Volume 4, due out in November.