



Escot Bus Lines

Celebrating 30 Years in 2013

by Larry Plachno

Photos courtesy of Escot Bus Lines

The International Motorcoach Group held their 15th Annual Strategic Alliance meeting on August 9, 2012 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. At that meeting, Escot Bus Lines received their Operator of the Year Award. Prevost delivered one of Escot's new coaches with this special exterior graphics that highlights the award while also showing scenes from the Tampa and St. Petersburg areas.

The International Motorcoach Group (IMG) held their 15th Annual IMG Strategic Alliance meeting on August 9, 2012. It was held at the Nicollet Pavilion in Minneapolis, Minnesota. A major part of their activities was naming the recipient of their International Motorcoach Group Operator of the Year Award. This award is made annually and is based on various criteria ranging from operational excellence, to safety record, to best practices, to community and industry involvement, to engagement with IMG. The 2012 Award was presented to Escot Bus Lines.

Accepting the award was Escot President Brian Scott and his sister, Vice President Pamela Scott-Calixto. They were joined by their father, Lewis (Lou) Scott, who founded the company in 1983. In accepting the award, Brian Scott praised the commitment of his

staff and the dedication they have shown throughout the years to customer service and safety. IMG consists of 50 family-owned premium motorcoach companies operating in North America. Escot Bus Lines has been a member of IMG since 2001.

Along with the award came a special surprise. Escot Bus Lines had previously ordered four new Prevost coaches. Prevost saw to it that one of the coaches was wrapped in exterior graphics announcing that Escot Bus Lines has been named Operator of the Year. The exterior had also been wrapped in scenes from the Tampa and St. Petersburg area. Then, the coach was driven to Minneapolis so that it could be presented to the Scott family following receipt of the award.

Escot Bus Lines has been part of the IMG since 2001 and Brian Scott has played a very

active role in the leadership of IMG, being chairman in 2008-09. Bronwyn Wilson, president, IMG said: "Escot Bus Lines embodies the qualities of IMG – excellence in service, commitment to safety and outstanding customer service. The combined team at Escot is a wonderful example of leadership and dedication not only to their customers, the industry but also to the community."

Company History

Escot Bus Lines dates its history from 1983. In that year, Lewis and Diane Scott moved from upstate New York to Florida with their children. Prior to moving to Florida, Lewis was employed by a computer manufacturer while Diane's experience was in data processing for medical offices. Their goal was to purchase and run a business in Florida. While neither Lewis nor Diane had any prior experience with buses, they both liked to travel. As a result, they accepted an opportunity to invest \$10,000 and take over a small bus company in Largo, Florida.

Largo is located about 20 miles west of Tampa on Florida's west coast and the Gulf of Mexico. The fleet of the little bus company consisted of two Ford minibuses while operations primarily involved running shuttle service to the nearby dog and horse race tracks.

Escot Bus Lines started out as a family business and has remained so ever since. Lewis was the driver while Diane kept the office running. Son Brian and daughter Pam helped as soon as they were old enough. While in high school, the children would get up at 5 a.m. to clean buses, and by all accounts were thrilled. Brian got his chauffeur's license at age 18 and later spent 10 years working in maintenance while Pam began working in the office.

In 1986 Escot Bus Lines leased a 1980 Eagle and expanded into coach operations. That worked out so well that when the lease on the Eagle was up, the company purchased a 1986 LAG coach. Much of the initial success of coach operations at Escot Bus Lines was due to Diane working with other bus companies in the area. Escot would take the referral and overflow business from other bus operators. Word spread that the Scott family would respect the other bus companies and their customers, and hence their coach business increased.

In retrospect, it was fortunate that Escot Bus Lines expanded into coaches when they did. Later in the 1980s, the State of Florida established a lottery that reduced interest in the dog and horse tracks by offering a chance at higher winnings. As the service to the dog and horse tracks declined, eventually disappearing entirely, the Scott family began concentrating on coach charters. By the end of the decade Escot Bus Lines was involved in doing interstate work.



To expand in coaches, Escot Bus Lines went into LAG coaches after the Eagle lease was up. They started by purchasing a 1986 LAG and then other LAG coaches joined the fleet.



Although Escot started off with minibuses, it moved into coaches in 1986. Diane Scott poses adjacent to the 1980 Eagle that was leased to get Escot Bus into coach operations.

As Brian and Pamela Scott became more active in company management, they realized that the charter business could have peaks and valleys. As a result, they began to diversify operations, and starting in the 1990s, began doing more work in the tourist business. This included providing transportation for international and domestic tour operators as well as handling incoming tourist business from other companies.

In more recent years, Escot Bus Lines has expanded with contract and scheduled service. In 2002, the company won a contract with Tampa International Airport to provide employee shuttle service. The contract was renewed in 2007 for five more years. This explains why the Escot fleet includes transit buses as well as coaches and minibuses.

As the company expanded, the Scotts found themselves more involved with operations in the Orlando area, which is located about 80 miles northeast of the home office in Largo. As the biggest traffic generator in

central Florida, the Orlando market was quickly recognized as a growth opportunity and an Escot Bus Lines office was opened in 1999 with little more than a local telephone number. However, so much business was being generated in the Orlando area that the company now bases buses in Orlando and has made significant investments in facilities and infrastructure. More recently, Escot Bus Lines has opened an office in Sarasota, another active community on the Gulf located about 50 miles south of Largo to promote and operate the latest expansion effort – scheduled service to South Florida Cruise Ports from points in central and the west coast of Florida. Expectations are that Sarasota will also become an equipment point in the future.

A Success Story

What is the reason for the success of Escot Bus Lines and its prominence in the industry? Perhaps the most obvious is that the company started with a good founda-

tion and premise. Founder Lewis Scott said that Escot Bus Lines was successful because the staff always tries to do a good job for their customers. Brian Scott and Pamela Scott, current company president and vice president, both agree their daily goal is to meet and exceed customer expectations. The company regularly has customer appreciation programs, including several to help celebrate the company's 25th Anniversary in 2008, and plans for their 30th Anniversary in 2013.

Other factors that have helped the company is remaining a family business, which allows them to react to customer needs faster than many other companies. It also helps that the company has developed diversified operations. In addition to charters and tours, Escot Bus Lines operates scheduled service and a wide range of contract services and are currently working on increasing their international presence. Keeping the fleet relatively new and well equipped has pleased passengers and made

This view shows some of the buses and coaches parked near the early garage in Largo, Florida. The fleet would expand significantly in the following years.



By the turn of the century, Escot Bus Lines was operating more than 20 coaches including about 17 Setras. Here is one of the Setra coaches on a trip to Canada.





Here is a current line-up of buses at the Escot Bus Lines garage. The current fleet includes 45 late model coaches and 16 transit buses.



Here are some buses at the main garage. Escot Bus Lines now also has a facility in Orlando and already has an office in Sarasota.

it easier to hire good quality drivers. In addition, management credits its professional Web site as being a major selling tool.

Brian Scott has not only been active in the industry but has been tapped as a leader

on several occasions. Scott served as a president of the Florida Motorcoach Association and chairman of the United Motorcoach Association each for two-year terms, and is currently a member of the UMA

board. The company joined the International Motorcoach Group (IMG) in 2001 with Scott serving as IMG chairman in 2008-2010. He has also served on the IMG board and is its representative on the board of the Global Passenger Network, an organization founded by IMG. Most Recently, Scott was appointed to the board of directors of the local transit agency – the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority by the County Board of Commissioners.

Shown here is one of the Prevosts in the current Escot Bus Lines fleet. The paint scheme is a basic white with the flags of the nations of those visitors who regularly use Escot buses for transportation. The flags do change occasionally depending where Escot's customers come from.



Current Operations

Brian and Pam are both fond of observing that Escot Bus Lines originally started out with scheduled service and has come full circle through charters, tours and contracts and is now back running scheduled service again. The company is extremely diversified in its operations. Included are charters, multi-day tours, game-day express service to regional sporting events, regular runs to Seminole Hard Rock Casino and contract services.

A substantial portion of the business comes from high schools, church groups, family reunions and tours. Escot Bus Lines will operate everything from a month long plus tour, with buses operating as far away as Alaska, to a day trip for a local group.

To smooth out the peaks and valleys in charter service, the Scotts decided to put additional emphasis on contract operations. This included employee shuttles and a contract with Tampa International Airport as well as other Tampa area employers. The company also moved back into scheduled service by serving the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino on the Seminole Indian Reservation.

Some of Escot Bus Lines' major contracts center around providing shuttle service to cruise ships that depart from the ports of Miami and Everglades. There are three routes with stops at 40 different locations. Escot Bus Lines is the official long distance ground carrier in Florida for several major cruise companies including Mediterranean Shipping Cruises, Princess Cruises, Royal Caribbean



Congratulates
ESCOT BUS LINES
 on 30 Years of Service

Cruise Lines, Holland America Line and Celebrity Cruises.

The Escot Fleet

Escot Bus Lines today is a very diversified operation with 45 late model motorcoaches and 16 transit buses. Their well-known paint scheme includes a white coach with a series of international flags. Although this design originally came with used

coaches from another company, the Scott family decided to retain the basic design with the flags. However, the flags have evolved over time to reflect their current customer mix.

Over the years Escot Bus Lines has operated a wide range of coaches from just about every major coach manufacturer represented in the United States. Their first coach was a leased Eagle and that was replaced by a pre-

owned LAG. Their first new coach was purchased in 1990. By the turn of the century, Escot was operating more than 20 coaches including about 17 Setras. The company invested in Setra coaches at that time because they felt that their European design set Escot apart from the competition.

In more recent years the company has operated Prevost, MCI and Van Hool coaches. By 2007 the company's fleet included 39 coaches as well as three minibuses and a mix of transit buses. Keeping the fleet new has not only made it easier to get good drivers but also pleases customers.

The latest equipment order by Escot Bus Lines involves four new Prevost H3-45 coaches which are equipped with wheelchair lifts, three-point seatbelts and electronic destination signs. One bus in this order received the special exterior graphics and was driven to the IMG award in Minneapolis.

While the Scott family has received offers to sell Escot Bus Lines, they continue to operate and expand it as a family business. Based on their success and prominence in the industry, they obviously know how to run a bus company and will see additional success and expansion in the future. The company celebrates its 30th anniversary in 2013 and has obviously come a long way from 1983. □

Shown here is the order of four Prevost H3-45 coaches delivered to Escot Bus Lines in 2012. Three of the coaches came with the traditional Escot Bus Lines paint scheme while the fourth had special graphics to commemorate the Operator of the Year award by the International Motorcoach Group.



Congratulations Escot Bus Lines on 30 years of Excellence!

The Shareholders, Partners and staff of the International Motor Coach Group (IMG) congratulate Lewis, Brian, Pam and the staff of Escot Bus Lines on 30 years of excellence and service to the Motorcoach Industry.

IMG is proud to have Escot Bus Lines as an active shareholder since 2001, and proud recipient of IMG's 2012 Operator of the Year Award.



INTERNATIONAL
MOTOR COACH
GROUP, INC.

www.imgcoach.com

ESCOT BUS LINES



SINCE 1983

(727) 545-2088

www.escotbuslines.com

From the February 2013 issue of National Bus Trader



Address: 9698 W. Judson Rd, Polo Illinois 61064

Office: (815) 946-2341

Website: www.busesmag.com