

Anchor Transportation

30 Years and Counting in a Growing Nashville

As the Southern region of the U.S. grows, so grows Anchor

Photos courtesy of Anchor Transportation and MCI



Anchor Transportation recently celebrated 30 years in business and has become an integral part of the business community in Tennessee, Kentucky and Alabama. Originally founded in Murfreesboro, Tennessee in 1989, the company later moved to Nashville. From a humble beginning with one coach, the company has expanded and today operates a fleet of 90 coaches and minibuses.

Most motorcoach operators lead with their services, but Nashville's Anchor Transportation leads with the company and community values that have helped this family-owned company grow. This successful, 30-year tour and charter company was born out of a desire to serve with high standards in passenger safety and comfort, see-

ing to the well-being of its employees and giving back to the community.

Founded in 1989 by Drs. John and Yullie Stancil in Murfreesboro, about 35 miles southeast of Nashville, Anchor began as a one-coach operator carrying the Stancil name to serve local church groups. More coaches followed as did a headquarters

move to Nashville for the Anchor Transportation brand. "The name represents our purpose, that we are a company that holds on to the values we believe in," said Jared Stancil, a nephew of the founders who joined the company in 1999. As vice president and general manager of this growing company, Stancil is continuing his family's passion for service and the motorcoach industry.



Anchor has an MCI 102DL3 that was painted red and stands out from the rest of the fleet. It is shown here boarding passengers at the Grand Ole Opry House in Nashville.



The military is one of Anchor's largest customers. This photo shows Anchor coaches picking up troops at Fort Campbell Army Base in the early 2000s for a special movement.

These values – empathy, consistency, originality, courage and integrity – serve as a compass for interactions between co-workers, customers and vendors alike. Today, with a fleet of more than 90 coaches and minibuses, Anchor ranks among the top 50 passenger carriers in the United States with offices in Nashville, Jackson, Tennessee, Louisville, Kentucky and Tusculumbia, Alabama.

Anchor Transportation's business today goes well beyond church groups, though they remain among the company's oldest and most loyal customers. Through organic growth and acquisitions, Anchor is now an established regional name in local school and DOD-certified military transport, tourism, event and commuter shuttles and high-profile regional meetings and conventions, including service at Nashville's upcoming UMA Expo, January 19-23.

"We practice our values every day for our customers, co-workers and vendors," explains Stancil, who learned the business from the ground up working with his uncle. "We know our customer very well, we're supporting a growing region, and we believe in the best equipment for the safest service. It's helped build our reputation throughout Nashville and the region." Adds Stancil, Anchor's team is "looking forward to serving visitors at UMA Expo." Anchor will have 10 coaches dedicated to transporting UMA attendees to evening events.

Anchor has had a relationship with MCI from day one. The Stancils began the company with a single early MCI MC-9 model and has favored the company's D models throughout its history. The D4505 is now the mainstay of its 70-coach fleet. However, two years ago, Stancil says "the wow factor" of the newly designed MCI J4500 caught his attention as Anchor was considering potential expansion of its upscale corporate charter business. Since 2017, Stancil and his team

have added 13 amenity-filled J4500s to boost the company's market share in corporate transportation.

Anchor knows about managing the life of its fleet. While the company has continued to invest in new vehicles, Stancil and his management team know how to get full value out of older coaches. Anchor works with longtime industry leader Sardo to refurbish the seating and flooring in older coaches and its technicians make sure these older vehicles run efficiently with the installation of new brushless motor condensers. Driver shades and LED headlights are also added. The company is committed to a 20-year lifespan for all coaches, with older models placed on shorter shuttle routes before they are removed from service.

This strategy would not be possible without MCI's reputation for quality service and reliability, Stancil says. "We learned very early that investing in quality is essential to building a company," said Stancil, "You're not only transporting people. Investing in the best equipment gives you a reputation for reliability, too."

As Nashville grows, so grows Anchor

The U.S. Census estimates that Nashville's population grew by an average of 83 people a day between July 2017 and July 2018 while major U.S. metro areas including New York, Los Angeles and Chicago were seeing notable declines. Employers including Amazon, Mitsubishi, EY and Alliance Bernstein have moved in during the same period, providing some 10,000 new jobs since 2018.

Operations began with a pre-owned MCI MC-9 with the first operations under the Stancil name. Here, bus operator Clayton Rutledge poses with coach #109 in the early 1990s. The Anchor name was adopted at a later date.





Anchor Transportation is no stranger to scheduled service. Shown here is an Anchor D4505 operating on a scheduled route as a Tennessee Public Transportation Provider.



The large and varied fleet of Anchor Transportation includes the newest MCI J4500 coach models as well as smaller shuttle buses that are used for smaller groups and local shuttles.

"We're seeing tremendous growth in our town with people moving here, and we see the same happening in Louisville and other areas around us," said Stancil. "Nashville is also in the Top 10 destinations for leisure and corporate travel, which provides consistent business all year round. The city is a whole lot more than honky-tonks at night."

Tourism is a big attraction with most popular destinations including the Grand Ole Opry, the Johnny Cash Museum, historic mansions and Music Row, home to the city's recording industry and RCA's Studio B where Elvis Presley recorded more than 200 songs.

As Stancil notes, population, business and tourism growth throughout the Southeastern United States have created a new set of transportation demands. It is one of the reasons why Anchor expanded its fleet to the all-new J4500 two years ago.

"Our customers want a luxury transportation experience," explains Stancil. "(The J4500) offers a unique, very welcoming stairwell entry, good-looking and comfortable seating, large baggage bays and reliable Wi-Fi with outlets that let them work or relax along the way," he said, adding, "And as our service area increases and clients start using coaches for different transportation purposes than they might today, that is going to give us a lot of versatility."

Stancil also credits strategic acquisitions with continued growth at Anchor. The company has expanded its Anchor Tours business with the purchase of the charter business of Toby Tours in Louisville, Kentucky and Brantley Charter in Lexington, Tennessee. "Louisville is going very well with 20 percent annual growth over the past three years," said Stancil. "We are pleased that our values aligned with the existing Toby clients. Brantley was similar; we shared many of their core values. We're planning future acquisitions and we like to look at compa-

nies that have built their level of service and customer loyalty by these same standards."

Such shared values are also important for building Anchor's team. "We want to make sure our values match up to the companies we are going to acquire and that their employees will embrace our vision," said Stancil. "We have employees that have been with us 20 years and as we continue to hire new talent, we want to consistently provide a workplace experience where people like working for us."

Three decades of safety, service and the latest technology

Anchor Transportation now employs 175 staff members, drivers and technicians in all its four office locations and at its 10-acre headquarters site in Nashville. It is a business that runs on superior customer

service, well-trained technicians and the latest safety, energy measurement and operating technology.

Anchor's long MCI relationship goes well beyond vehicle purchases. The company's technicians all receive ongoing training from MCI Academy online and in its Louisville-based classroom with company-provided pay incentives for skill advancements and system certifications.

Stancil identified Chester Martin, a 30-year-old employee who joined Anchor in March, as a new enrollee at MCI Academy's new Motorcoach Technician Apprenticeship Program, which is officially registered with the U.S. Department of Labor. The program combines technical coursework and work-based learning that will allow Martin to complete Journeyworker Certification over the

At one time Anchor Transportation was part of the Trailways Network. This 2007 photo shows a number of Anchor "D" coaches painted and lettered for Trailways.



next five years. "In addition to Chester, we now have roughly eight technicians at various levels of training within the MCI Academy program and our goal is to get them all to Master level," said Stancil. "We have performance incentive plans put together for them as they complete the modules through the MCI Academy."

Besides loyal workers with technical proficiency, Anchor puts high value on safety and energy conservation. The company has invested in a complete Samsara suite of fleet-tracking technology including onboard dash cameras, electronic logging devices, telematics and GPS to track coaches in real time, reduce paperwork and gain valuable data on driver and fleet performance.

This operator has won the President's Circle Award for Risk Control from TRAX Insurance for three consecutive years. The TRAX Award is given to only a few operators for their safety procedures, policies and facilities, participation in risk management and safety workshops, compliance with OSHA regulations and overall accident record.

Stancil also credits new Cummins technology for its more efficient X12 engine now standard on MCI models as well as its new Connected Diagnostics systems informing all telematics for safety and performance.

Going green throughout the business

Environmentally smart, money-saving practices are evident throughout Anchor's operations. Anchor has a digital ground game that not only saves paper in the office and onboard – it also enables more efficient customer service with a secure "Pay Online" feature on desktop and mobile.

Building strong relationships inside the company and in the community, one of the first things visitors see on the company's Web site is Anchor's approach to values, which it describes as "a compass for our actions and . . . how we behave in the world." It is clear Anchor does things a bit differently. They offer premium benefits to its entire staff at all locations, including low health insurance premiums, free life insurance, housing assistance, counseling and a generous 401(k) retirement plan match.

Training dollars are also made available companywide, with customer service skills taught at the same level as technical training. Pay incentives go with training. Giving back is also important. Every year, Anchor volunteers its coaches and drivers for inner-city school field trips and programs that serve underprivileged children. It also supports an annual free coach trip for families of fallen police officers to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial in Washington, D.C.

"I have worked with my uncle John for over 20 years, and when I look back, I am grateful for the opportunity he has given me and the opportunity to share these experiences together," said Stancil. "It

brings a lot of joy to say, 'look at how far we've come'" concluding with the four values that Anchor follows: "Honor God, do right, serve others, and be safe." □

Keeping us with customer demands, Anchor began expanding its fleet to the all-new J4500 model two years ago. The company also increased its tour business with the recent purchase of the charter business of Toby Tours in Louisville. Management credits shared values and loyal workers with much of the company success.



From the
January, 2020

Issue of

National Bus Trader

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