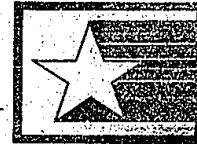


Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



Thursday, July 5, 1984 O&E

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RANDY DORST/staff photographer

Eva Marie Bartman and her husband, Chuck, are partners in VIP Limousine Service in Farmington Hills.

Getting around Celebrities use luxury limousines

By Carmina Brooks
special writer

HAVE YOU EVER wondered how Paul Newman gets around town during the Grand Prix? Or where Vic Damone, Jody Collins or Wayne Newton go when they are in town and not performing at Meadow Brook Music Festival?

Celebrities spend a lot of their time being driven in chauffeured limousines. Sometimes there is a bodyguard in the front seat beside the driver, who can whisk them into a hotel unnoticed.

Dan Glumb, director of sales at Somerset Limousine Service in Troy, said, "Celebrities, traveling or touring, have a continuing life in their hotel, at the theater, or in between. They want to live like everybody else."

"We get them out of the hotel. We know where to take them, what it costs and how long it takes. We can take them golfing. We can make advance arrangements at restaurants for private dining. The Beach Boys wanted to go shopping, so we took them to the Oakland Mall."

THE ROLLS-ROYCE, Cadillac, Lincoln Continental or Chrysler New Yorker that transport important people are stretched vehicles to hold five or more individuals in the lap of luxury and privacy.

These cars are mobile lounges, equipped with computerized bar, telephone, television, stereo, video movies, bar utensils of gold or silver, fine crystal, fresh flowers, and edibles from shrimp to chocolate — all designed to

meet the slightest fancy and indulge secret desires.

The traveling cocoon is surrounded by privacy walls and bulletproof windows. Some limos have a moonroof for a sky view of the outside world.

This lifestyle is available to anyone, for a price.

A look at six chauffeured limousine services in the metropolitan area reveals some surprises. It is not all fun and games. The business has its scary moments and insurance costs a bundle. Security is an important facet of limousine service.

The Detroit area, home of the big three car makers, does not lead the nation in the use of luxury limousines.

SUMMERTIME is peak season for limo rental companies — when the Detroit Grand Prix, the Michigan State Fair, Meadow Brook Music Festival, Pine Knob Music Theater and downtown Detroit festivals bring in celebrities. Sport figures are visiting by the teamload, and weddings and anniversaries are celebrated in splendorous fashion with an expensive night out on the town.

Detroit is considered limousine-poor, compared to towns like Los Angeles, New York and Chicago," said Dana Poprasky, general manager of the Ambassador Limousine Service in Rochester, "but it is definitely a growing business."

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Poprasky said new drunk-driving laws are a big factor in the growth of local clientele. "People feel safer, and New Years Eve business has soared."

Ronald Ulmer, general manager of Rodeo Drive Limousine Service in Farmington Hills, gives the Detroit area a six on a scale of one to 10.

Oliver Lindsay, 23, owner of University Limousine Service in Plymouth, said, "The whole service sector of our economy is growing. Instead of doing the work yourself, people will hire it done. Hiring a limousine is an easy weekend. No driving. No parking hassles. It is safer."

EVA MARIE AND Chuck Bartman, both chauffeurs and partners, started the VIP Limousine Service in Farmington Hills in January with three vehicles. Eva Marie, 31, is the mother of two children. She studied karate and for her chauffeur's license, passing

both tests with honors. Limo services in this area lag behind places like Hawaii, where "you see them all over place," Chuck said.

Somerset Limousine Service is owned by Troy resident Barbara Leding, who started with one car five years ago. Somerset now employs 15 chauffeurs, a tour director, two sales people, and two full-time and 50 part-time security people. Somerset also owns the Arrow Bus Co., a fleet of 47-passenger luxury motor coaches complete with restroom for charter work.

Somerset has six stretched Cadillacs, and Lincolns equipped with all the trappings of pleasure. Somerset charges, for a minimum two-hour period, \$95 an hour with \$35 an hour added for additional time.

Somerset will provide full-time security from the airport, on an entire

(Concluded on next page)

Attic seeks volunteers for Rafter's group

The Attic Theatre in the theater in Greektown, Detroit will hold its Membership in the premiere volunteer rally, organization, named the Rafter's, is open to any

one with an interest in being part of the theater's support group. Pri-

or theater experience is not necessary.

For more informa-

tion, call the theater at 933-7750.

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