

George Alva, Yellow-Checker Cab Company, San Antonio, Texas Named the TLPA 2006 Taxicab Driver of the Year

George Alva, independent contractor taxicab driver, for Greater San Antonio Transportation Company, dba, Yellow-Checker Cab Company, San Antonio, Texas, has been selected as the TLPA 2006 Taxicab Driver of the Year.

The impressive package submitted by Mike Barnard, President & General Manager of Greater San Antonio Transportation Company (GSATC), nominating George for this award listed 17 major accomplishments and contributions George has made to the company, generating significant improvements in customer service and company procedures. He wrote, "Most recently, George was appointed by the San Antonio City Council to serve as a voting member on the city's Transportation Advisory Board."

George Alva was born in San Antonio, Texas. When he was six years old, his mother began working for the original Checker Cab Company. After graduation from high school, he worked intermittently for Checker as a driver, call-taker, dispatcher and inspector. George left the company to join the U.S. Navy and served a 4-year tour of duty. He says, "They kept their promise to show me the world. I became a Shellback (Equator crossing), Blue Nose (Arctic Circle crossing), and member of the Order of the Ditch (Panama Canal crossing)."

Upon return to civilian life, George held a variety of jobs. In 1998 he left a position where he was the Training Supervisor and decided he would drive a cab until something else came along. George states, "Nothing else came along but I'm not complaining. This business gets in your blood and nothing else seems as exciting or challenging. Driving a cab is not a job for a lazy, unmotivated person. You have to hustle for every dollar. It's as nerve racking as it is exciting and rewarding. And, I enjoy the freedom that comes with driving a cab. The scenery changes every few minutes and I learn something from everyone I meet in my cab. There are times when I get to



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touch people's lives in what I hope is a positive way."

When asked what he liked about working for GSATC, George responded, "I have seen the other side of the coin. I have seen paper tab dispatching, greasy shade tree mechanics plus graft and corruption. Those were the old days that I hope will never make a comeback. What I like about GSATC is the professional, positive appearance, attitude and outlook of the company. The technology is hi-tech which makes my job easier. Management actively strives to make this Yellow-Checker Cab Company the BEST in the country! And, management allows me to personally participate and contribute in achieving this goal."

George's interesting experiences driving a taxicab include, "A couple of years ago a local news anchor rode with me for two days taping a confessions-type of scenario for her morning show. Fortunately, everyone kept it G-rated. My cab and I made a couple of incredibly brief appearances in the movie *Miss Congeniality*. Meeting Sir Michael Caine, Candice Bergen, Benjamin Bratt and Sandra Bullock was a highlight of my taxi career."

George lists the qualities of a good taxicab driver: "Motivation, intelligence, wisdom, firmness, sense of humor, street knowledge, good grooming and hygiene habits, good communication skills, respect for self and others and a friendly, cheerful attitude." George said that since he began driving a taxicab the key changes he has seen are: improvements in technology, better vehicles

and better maintenance, drivers' personal pride in grooming and appearance, better attitudes, quicker response time to calls, less down time, continuing training programs and driver certifications.

George notes, "My interests are history, science, religion, trivia, some sports, politics, music and my extensive collection of taxi memorabilia. In my spare time I'm an actor in a murder-mystery dinner theater troupe. I sing and play guitar and have so far written one country love song. The only two things that stand between me and a recording contract are my singing and my playing."

George has two adult sons, Alan and Tim, and a younger sister, Laura. He met his wife, Rachel in 2001 when she worked for Yellow-Checker Cab in charge of the Lost & Found Department. They were wed in July 2005.

George's reaction to winning this award is the following, "There are few things that are as fulfilling as recognition of one's efforts and accomplishments. I am overwhelmed, surprised and ecstatic. I'm very proud to be the recipient of such a prestigious award. I am grateful to the people who run the company I work with for giving me the opportunity to excel. By no means am I the only driver within this company that should have been considered for this award. Others have contributed to the advancement of company goals and the overall improvement in the local taxi industry. They too deserve recognition. I thank them, company management, staff and every driver that willingly and generously gave of their time to help me every time I asked them to participate in any community project."

In honor of his years as an exemplary driver and being a positive role model for his fellow drivers and company staff, the Taxicab, Limousine & Paratransit Association is proud to recognize George Alva as the TLPA 2006 Taxicab Driver of the Year. ■