

# 2018 Limousine & Sedan Chauffeur of the Year

## Grigory Eskin of Vital Transportation, Inc.

By Bridget Ann Peery

When Grigory Eskin, his wife, Rachel, and 6-year-old son, Elliot, arrived in New York City in 1980, Eskin only had \$316 in his pocket. Originally from Lithuania, he spoke six languages when he and his family immigrated to the United States. But English was not one of them. Knowing that he needed to provide for his family, Eskin followed a friend's advice and drove a yellow cab for a few years. He then sold his medallion in 1983 and joined Vital Transportation Inc., just as the company was getting its start. Nearly 35 years later, Eskin, now 71, has risen to the top of his profession and has been named TLPA's Limousine & Sedan Chauffeur of the Year.

"Vital is my company; it is my family," Eskin says. "Everything I have in life is because of Vital. If you are a hard-working person and you are willing to get something, you're always going to get it. ... My main goal was to give my kids the best education. And I did."

Eskin knew that his family would have a better future in America. They welcomed Betsy, his daughter, in 1983 and became U.S. citizens two years after that. Today, the proud father delights in saying that his son and his daughter are more successful than he is. In addition to his family, Eskin's work is what he takes pride in the most. He attributes his success to placing safety and consistency above all else, underlining that clients depend on a clean car and reliable service. It is no surprise, then, that Eskin has been in charge of quality control for Vital Transportation for many years. He strives to give each individual customer what he or she needs—taking no short cuts.

"To make the customer happy, I don't think I lose. I gain. I gain a friend. I gain a customer and I feel good," he says. Eskin remembers one client who had her child accompanying her on a trip. The child was too young to travel without a child

seat, although the woman had not shared that with dispatch. Eskin told his customer that he did not feel comfortable driving the child without a car seat—so, he went out and bought one.

"I bought the child's seat and she was happy. She almost cried. 'It's on the house,' I told her," Eskin recounts warmly. "I still have that child seat in my home. I will never forget this as long as I live," he recalls the woman saying. "That's what she said."

The woman later called the company to say thank you. Berj Haroutunian, president of Vital Transportation, says that otherwise he would have never known of Eskin's gesture.

Haroutunian spoke of Eskin's flawless driving record, and mentions that Eskin had been awarded a driver safety award years earlier by the New York City Taxi & Limousine Commission—an award given to the safest drivers in the city who have



Grigory Eskin and his family immigrated to the U.S. in 1980. He has been driving with Vital Transportation, Inc. for 35 years.

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received no tickets that year.

"In New York, it's almost impossible not to get a ticket," says Haroutunian, who admires Eskin's zeal for a clean, well-kept car. "He probably has the oldest car in the company and the car that's in the best shape." Eskin has been with the company since the beginning, watching the company grow from 10 cars to around 450 cars. And because of his great attitude, meticulous attention to detail, and hard-work ethic, customers request Eskin all the time, Haroutunian says.

"Grigory is one of a kind—I wish everyone was like him," Haroutunian says. He even joked that if he needs to get somewhere fast, like the airport, for example, "I'll say, 'I don't want to use you, Grigory,' because he drives too carefully."

Eskin remains committed to ensuring the safety of Vital Transportation's vehicles as chairman of the Clean Car Committee, coming in every Friday to do quality control and customer service training. Though he thought he would retire when he turned 66, five years later Eskin is still with Vital Transportation.

"I help people. I give my heart and my soul," Eskin says. When he is not working, Eskin has many things to keep him busy. He enjoys taking care of his house, fixing cars, going fishing and growing roses.

"My wife loves roses. I make her happy," Eskin says, adding, "I may not have the biggest house ... but I can say my landscaping is the best on the street."