

Hooking up to a Dream...

The beginning of the *SCOTTY* Fire Safety House

When inspiration struck John Serro in 1956, he didn't hesitate to jump into action. The retired auto dealer was 55 years old and ready to try his hand at something new. He and his son-in-law, Joe Pirschl built their first camping trailer in Serro's Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania barn. Pirschl then towed the 16-1/2-foot trailer across the state to the East Coast, hoping to win the hearts and minds of dealers.

No one was interested.

Sitting in a Deep Creek, Maryland cabin on a rainy July 4, 1957, Serro was struck by a revelation. He sketched his idea for the ultimate travel trailer on the back of a calendar. The 13-foot trailer featured a bed, sink, two-burner stove, and dinette. The next day, he and Pirschl started constructing what would be known as the Scotty Sportsman. When it was completed, Serro hitched it to the back of his car and traveled to a mobile home show in Elkhart, Indiana, arriving on the very last day of the show. When people saw his little Scotty trailer, they were amazed and Serro left Indiana with 18 orders. It was the beginning of the Serro Travel Trailer Company of Irwin, Pennsylvania.

"We became the big name in little trailers," said Pirschl during a March 2003 interview.

By 1961, a mere four years after Serro and Pirschl hand-built their first Scotty trailer, they had set up factories in Irwin, Pennsylvania, Serro's hometown, and Bristow, Oklahoma.

"I sent four letters out to different towns in Oklahoma saying we were interested in constructing a small factory to build Scottys," said Pirschl. "All four towns responded so John and I toured the areas to see what would



John Serro's original 13-foot Scotty Sportsman was the forerunner to a pull-behind empire.

be ideal for our factory."

The pair settled on the Bristow area and purchased a piece of farm property along the turnpike. In 1968, Serro and Pirschl expanded south and set up a factory in Ashburn, Georgia. Both the Bristow and Ashburn factories closed in 1980.

"Times turned tough in 1980," said Pirschl. "Interest rates were high and no one was buying travel trailers. We had a major layoff at our Irwin plant in '80, but I was convinced the company would rebound."

In those early days, building factories wasn't enough for Serro and Pirschl. The opening of Scottyland USA, a 230-acre campsite and playground exclusively for the Serro Scotty trailer owners in picturesque Somerset County, Pennsylvania, attracted 63 Scottys from four states in June 1963.

The trailers were a hit with campers, fishermen, and families who wanted to see the U.S.A. in their Scottys. The original Serro Scotty Owners Association began in 1959 at the Irwin factory. At its height, there were 56 chapters throughout the United States.

The Scotty Clubs typically traveled together in caravans organized by their elected wagon masters. In 1966, Serro led a caravan of 60 white and turquoise trailers from Irwin to Mexico City.

By the late 1980s, the company was branching off into a new venture within their commercial vehicle division – constructing fire safety houses.

"A representative from Alcoa called us about building some fire safety houses," said Pirschl. "Alcoa wanted six as part of their Aluminum Cans for Burned Children

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"We became the big name in little trailers."

-Joe Pirschl

Canton Twp., Michigan Buys Second *SCOTTY*

Eleven years ago, the Canton Township, Michigan fire department purchased a *SCOTTY* Fire Safety House to educate students and adults on the importance of fire safety. The department's two level design was an earlier model produced by Mobile Concepts by Scotty and featured a full non-functional kitchen, second level bedroom, and a fireplace in the lower level living room.

"We were the first fire department in the state of Michigan to purchase a fire safety house in 1992," said Fire Marshal Frank Barrett of the Canton Township Fire Department.

Over the years, the department refined its educational routines and when Barrett was ready to upgrade to a new fire safety house, he once again chose Mobile Concepts by Scotty.

"The issues with our first fire safety house were evaluated and changes were incorporated into the design of our new house," Barrett said. The department took ownership of their new *SCOTTY* Fire Safety House in February 2003.

The Fire Safety House has become a familiar sight at the township's 17 public elementary schools and six private elementary schools over the years. Canton Township covers 36 square miles and the department has a full time staff of 46 firefighters, two fire inspectors, Barrett as fire marshal, and one fire chief. Total population of the township is approximately 75,000.

"We use our Fire Safety House primarily for kids from third grade and up," said Barrett. "We take the house to the schools on a regular basis both for yearly visits to the third grade class as well as scheduled events such as Boy Scout meetings, safety day, etc. We also utilize the house at the township's different festivals and events.

"Adults tour the house as well and quite often remark as to how much they learned!"



The Canton Twp. *SCOTTY* Fire Safety House.

Roughly, 1,500 to 2,000 children go through the Fire Safety House on a yearly basis.

Canton Township sold their first *SCOTTY* Fire Safety House to the Lincoln Park Firefighter Association in Lincoln Park, Michigan. The association has been trying to raise funds for the purchase of their own house. When the Canton Township department, which belongs to the Metropolitan Detroit Fire Inspectors Society, notified other member departments about their fire safety house for sale, Lincoln Park sent in the winning bid and


took possession of the house on February 10, 2003.

"When our older fire safety house came up at a very good price, Lincoln Park assembled a committee to look at funding, repairs, upgrades and now it sounds like they are going to make good use of the house," said Barrett.

Barrett said his department chose Mobile Concepts by Scotty to build their fire safety houses for several reasons.

"With both purchases, we considered other products, but no one else could match the design, functionality and appearance of the Scotty," he added. "Other manufacturers were not as receptive to the design changes we required, and no one else could provide the graphics, which are outstanding on the new house.

"When I first walked into the new house, it was obvious that there were some nice quality improvements. The lines are cleaner and the house felt much more open. The new control room is larger, much better organized and allows maximum control over all areas of the house.

"We greatly appreciate the customer service of Mobile Concepts by Scotty. Anne (Degré) and Chris (Simon) have stood behind their products all along. When problems developed, help was just a phone call away. They were very receptive and quite helpful in putting together the design of the new house. That's extremely important to us!" 

"We were the first fire department in the state of Michigan to purchase a fire safety house in 1992."

-Fire Marshal Frank Barrett, Canton Twp. Fire Department

Give us a call...



Mobile Concepts

by *SCOTTY*

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TECH TALK with Roger

Quality control manager at



Mobile
Concepts

by SCOTTY

"Cookie cutters are for bakeries!"

Building a mobile classroom that will do the job, exactly the way you want it, is what our company is all about. We at Mobile Concepts are interested in your concerns and how we can use our resources to help you meet your needs.

In this wonderful country, we have grown up with a rich heritage of customizing things to our liking. The freedom of choice is one of the greatest powers we have ever known, and we exercise that power daily. Think about it. Everybody in the department uses a different screen saver, orders something different from the lunch menu, and drives different vehicles that were purchased because they feature options that meet their individual family's need.

The needs of fire departments are as varied as the people who make up the departments, especially when it comes to public education. Teaching the public on the best response to the greatest and most likely threats can vary by how close that community is to high risk zones, such as nuclear power plants, earthquake or tornado zones, or areas plagued by wildfires.


Safety education is a broad spectrum so you shouldn't feel restrained when you customize your SCOTTY Fire Safety House to meet your educational needs.

Think about some of the safety issues that seem to fall through the cracks. Do you want to demonstrate window latch operations down on the level of small children? We can

make a freestanding floor demo window. How about a bedroom closet that warns, "Don't hide in closets during a fire," when the door is opened. What about a novelty like an 8-foot wave slide off the rear deck, or an area prepared for a future big screen TV? Your trailer's features are only limited by your ideas combined with our imagination. This is the clear advantage of having your vehicle built by Mobile Concepts by Scotty. The entire assembly will be done under our roof, period!

This means before the first tire is mounted to the frame, the arrow of your vision is set to the bowstring of our creativity. What will your public education be doing a decade from now? Planning for then and using equipment that's limited now is not the way to go. That's why Mobile Concepts is always at the cutting edge of having the type of features that most effectively presents your curriculum.

If your students don't see exciting,

dramatic safety demonstrations, then the lessons won't stick and the program isn't effective. That's why we are never satisfied with the status quo, and are always striving to outdo ourselves. Simply put, Mobile Concepts puts good ideas on wheels! 

Tours are available!

We're extending an invitation to tour our facility. Are you interested in a certain model or design? We typically have nine units under production at any time. Call us and we can schedule your tour. You can sit down with our design team and customize your vehicle. We are located 45 miles SE of Pittsburgh, PA, and accessible from PA Turnpike, 9 miles from old Exit 9, new Exit 91 Donegal, and 8 miles from old Exit 8, new Exit 75 New Stanton.

1-800-783-0213

Stop by and visit us at these 2003 shows:

April 3-5

FDIC, Indianapolis, IN

May 15-17

Fire Expo, Harrisburg, PA

July 24-26

Firehouse Expo, Baltimore, MD

August 22-25

ICHIEFS, Dallas, TX

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program. They took ownership of their safety houses and that was it.”

The new venture was in demand, said Pirschl, and by the 1990s, the travel trailer industry was slowing while *SCOTTY* Motor Homes and *SCOTTY* Fire Safety Houses became more and more popular. The *SCOTTY* Motor Homes were available in 20, 25 and 30-foot versions. The 25 and 30-foot homes were equipped with Cummins diesel engines. But when the phone rang, fire departments wanted the *SCOTTY* Fire Safety House.

Within three years of launching the first *SCOTTY* Fire Safety House, 104 had been constructed and sold to fire departments and fire safety organizations across the United States.

April 17, 1997 is a day Joe Pirschl will never forget. The Serro Scotty factory in Irwin was destroyed in an explosive fire.

“I remember looking through a window into my office and seeing the fire in the production area of the plant,” said Pirschl. “I watched as the fire consumed the bulletin


boards filled with old photographs in my office. It was devastating.”

Only 29 business days after the fire that destroyed the factory, the first *SCOTTY* Fire Safety House was completed in the company’s temporary new home in Mount Pleasant. The plant manager was able to reconstruct the original assembly layout and the orders for the Fire Safety Houses were filled.

“We never thought of closing the doors,” said Anne Degre, daughter of Joe Pirschl and current vice president of the company. After the fire, the Pirschl family changed the name of the company to Mobile Concepts by Scotty, incorporated in 2001. The little Scotty dog trademark, a concept created by John Serro, remained and is alive and well today.

TRAVEL RIGHT! TRAVEL LIGHT!! THE SCOTTY WAY!!!

SCOTTY SPORTSMAN 13 \$775 Standard
Retail F.O.B., Irwin, Pa.
Sleeps 4 or 5. Weight: 875 lbs.
Also available in a 15 foot Scotty model. Write for literature or see your Serro Scotty dealer.



This low, trim 13-foot beauty with aluminum exterior and aluminum gear-type windows and jalousie door with matching screens. Roomy dinette, built-in sink, 2-burner stove, ice refrigerator. Ample storage and cabinets. Keep in garages; use as spare bedroom. Ideal with new compact cars. Available in 3 floor plans, one with commode, —all with famous Serro step-down interiors.

SERRO TRAVEL TRAILER CO. 2091 ARONA RD., IRWIN, PA.



Serro Travel Trailer Company

“...Results from my 28-line ads in *SPORTS AFIELD* have surpassed all expectations. The phenomenal growth of my company, I feel, is due in no small measure to my advertising in *SPORTS AFIELD* and other outdoor magazines...”

John Serro

However, the main focus of this company is the manufacture of commercial trailers, specializing in mobile classrooms.

As John Serro said in 1963, “we’ve been dedicated to manufacturing a line of trailers that are rugged and beautiful.” That same outlook remains true in the 21st century as the company’s line of Fire Safety Houses and Community Safety Houses dominate the industry. 