

Joe Galati

President, Galati Yacht Sales

As we spotlight the outstanding performance of the Top 100 in this issue, I chose to profile a leader whose organization is an exceptional performer in all categories.

Joe Galati, president of Galati Yacht Sales, heads a dynamic, highly respected yacht dealership and family empire established in 1970. With 14 locations in Florida, Alabama, Texas and California along with Costa Rica and Mexico, Galati sells new Viking, Valhalla, Cruisers, Princess and Prestige yachts, along with pre-owned and brokerage yachts. A Marine Industry Certified Dealer that is also endorsed by the Certified Professional Yacht Brokers, Team Galati has earned impressive industry achievements and accolades. It is only one of six firms that have been inducted into *Boating Industry's* Top 100 Hall of Fame. Members have named to the Women Making Waves and 40 Under 40; won IYBA's Outstanding Young Professional of the Year; earned countless top dealer and CSI awards; and served in retail advisory and board positions for multiple industry groups and associations.

Today, Joe and his siblings including Carmine, Mike, Chris and Fran, along with Darren Plymale, continue to lead and raise the bar in all areas of dealership operations, backed by an expansive and experienced team of 200 yacht experts.

Boating Industry (BI): Let's start at the beginning. I understand your parents first purchased a marina on Anna Maria Island, FL in 1970 and you and your siblings have been involved since the outset. What was your earliest role in the business?

Joe Galati (JG): My mom and dad started us working the business early. My mom would have us kids sit quietly and listen while my father worked with prospects. We would see how he showed boats

and treated them. We learned very early that great integrity and sincerity was what would gain trust in our potential customers.

I started working part time in the boating business when I was 10 years old. When not in school, I worked with our boat rental business. My dad would also have me run the boats during sea trials to demonstrate to potential customers how easy it was to operate a boat. If someone that young could run a boat, then they could. At that time, I was running a 23'.

BI: When did you decide to launch a full-time career in the boating industry?

JG: When I graduated from high school in 1978, I went to work for the family business full time and went to community college at night. I had previously worked in all parts of the business but when coming on full time, my primary job was



Joe Galati

as a salesman working under my father's mentorship. Back then we had to do many jobs in all areas of the business ... show setup, cleaning, rigging, and selling.

BI: Key challenges in your early career?

JG: Back then, we sold outboard boats that didn't come with engines or controls; so, when we sold a boat, we would have to install the outboards and rig the boats many times after hours. These efforts allowed me to learn the ins/outs of boats.



The second generation of Galati siblings are all actively engaged in the business. Matriarch Anna Maria Galati, left, continues to inspire the family to excellence.

BI: I understand one of your earliest contributions - and an area of great enjoyment - involves the launch and major growth of Galati's rendezvous program.

JG: In 1987 when I married my wife Jennifer, she was very excited to spend time on the water and she started our rendezvous program which allowed us to boat with our owners and to teach many people about the boating lifestyle. This concept has grown throughout the years and allowed us some exceptional boating experiences which have generated great friendships with our customers.

Being part of these trips and watching the excitement of boating from both the first-time boater to the veteran boater is amazing. Getting the opportunity to be on the water is an experience that you cannot explain, you have to just do it!

Our rendezvous have had me navigate throughout the Gulf of Mexico, Bahamas, and the Atlantic. The rendezvous also allowed the opportunity to run many different models of the brands we sell, giving me firsthand experience of each of them. I've fished Costa Rica and Mexico and enjoyed time in the Great Lakes. I've taken delivery of both Viking and Princess Yachts in New Jersey and brought them south to our locations. I am very blessed as now I am introducing my love of boating to our two grandchildren.

BI: What's your major area of business focus today?

JG: Management centered on the northern gulf through Texas. Additionally, I hold a position on the board, where I contribute to overseeing the broader, big-picture aspects of our business operations.

BI: What are the major challenges of working in a family-owned business ... and how does the Galati family work through those challenges?

JG: The biggest challenges include navigating personal and professional boundaries, ensuring fairness, and maintaining a healthy work-life balance. We've recognized the importance of these challenges, especially as we've transitioned from one generation to the next. What sets us apart is our commitment to leveraging the strengths and passions of each family member. As each of us joined the business, we pursued our individual passions, aligning with departments that fit our expertise and interests. This approach has allowed us to operate as a true partnership, with a shared focus on enhancing the customer experience. Our success is deeply rooted in the mutual respect we hold for each other's contributions, creating a harmonious and dynamic family-business environment.

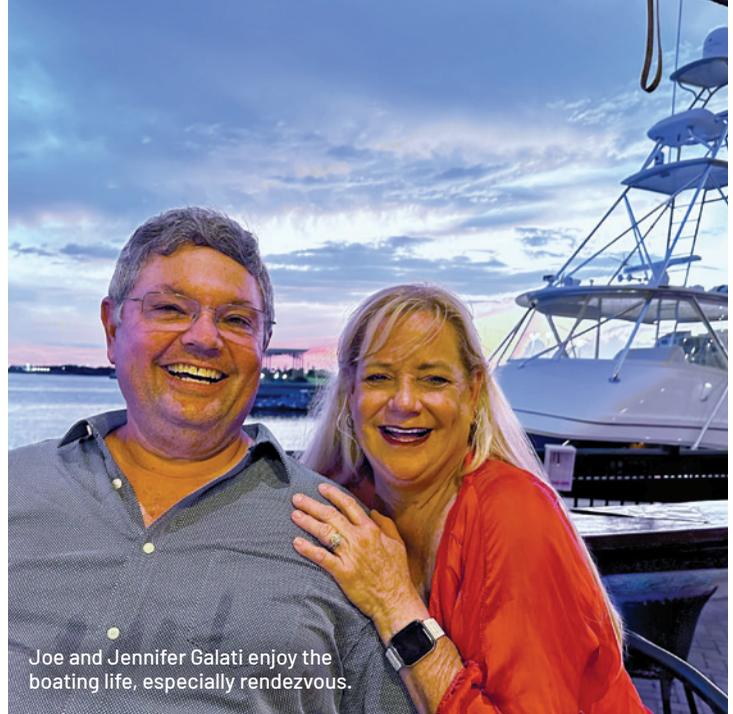
BI: Your family has expanded significantly, along with the growth of the business. Tell us about "Gen 3."

JG: I am extremely proud of "Gen 3" who are the sons and daughters of my brothers, sister and me. Gen 3 - and there are 12 - made the decision to join the family business on their own, and each person has taken on roles that play to their education and strengths. Members of Gen 3 work in sales, marketing, finance, human resources and operations. My daughter Maria leads our social media efforts and Joe Jr. works in sales. Just like our parents, we are teaching our adult children about the business, and industry.

BI: What are you most proud of in terms of your contributions/achievements within the boating industry?

JG: I'm most proud of the transformation of boating into a truly enjoyable and fun hobby for our clients at Galati Yachts. Over the years, our team has worked tirelessly to make boating a source of pleasure for those we serve.

However, what truly stands out for me is the incredible team members who



Joe and Jennifer Galati enjoy the boating life, especially rendezvous.

have joined us and made their entire careers here. It's an immense source of excitement to celebrate milestones like a team member's 20th anniversary with our company, and we've had numerous such celebrations. Our greatest achievement, in my opinion, is the creation of Team Galati itself. We've built a team that I believe is our most significant contribution to the boating industry.

BI: Words you live by?

JG: RESPECT! Growing up, I did every job in the industry - some I did well, others I did poorly. By discovering what it takes to do every job from sales, service, parts, accounting, and management, you learn to respect what it takes to get the job done, which in turn, makes you a better leader!

BI: What have been the key(s) to your success in carving out a successful and enduring marine industry career?

JG: Work ethic and staying true to my father's favorite saying: "Make your decision based on right and wrong not how much it cost, and you will always have a great reputation!"

We have been blessed with a great team that has allowed us to find our spot in the industry. Finding team members that have the same goals and focus as the company's is critical to our success; we all need to be focused in the same direction. We have focused on controlled growth to make sure we are able to always 'exceed our customer expectations.'

BI: After a successful 45-year career, how do you stay in the game?

JG: Early in my career it was all about books, tapes, training and mentors. Now, I stay focused on coaching the team. Between the tournaments and rendezvous, we get to spend quality time with our customers. Listening to them creates our strategy on how to take our business to the next level of success.

BI: Biggest challenge ahead for the industry?

JG: We must stay focused and prepared for the ups and downs of our industry. We are dealing with consumers' leisure dollars and their spending changes based on what is happening in the world and economy. There are people who have boating in their blood and will boat no matter what's happening. Then you have the group that comes in and out of boating; that group changes based on economy. It's our job when the latter group comes into the hobby of boating, to turn them into lifelong boaters. ●