

The Galati Way

THE FIVE GALATI SIBLINGS, ALONG WITH THEIR CHILDREN,
ARE PAVING THE WAY FOR **GALATI YACHTS'** FUTURE.

BY JO-LYNN BROWN | PHOTOS BY TRACY CROUSHORN



*It was a family business from the get-go.
We just never realized it.*

FRAN GALATI

The Galati family relocated from Westchester, New York, to Hollywood, Florida, in the late 1960s.

The matriarch of the Galati family, Anna Maria, was pregnant with the youngest of her five children. Michael Galati, the patriarch of the family, didn't want to raise his children in New York and had always loved being near the water. Florida was the perfect destination.

Fitting, considering the family eventually ended up on Anna Maria Island, which is where the family's business, Galati Yachts, is still based today.

With the passing of Michael Sr., in 1992, the business was passed down to his five children, Joseph, Carmine, Fran, Michael Jr. and Chris. Now, entering its third generation, the Galati children have their own children stepping into the business.

In 1992, when the second generation stepped in and took over running the business, it had one location.

Now, Galati Yachts has 15 locations, including two international locations, and is generating more than \$200 million in revenue.

Father would be proud. But, as Fran says, the story on how it all started would probably surprise most people.

It started in a little storeroom that was the home of the Galati family, of seven people.

One thing to know about the Galati siblings is they will take intermittent breaks, in between stories, to digress into substories and they will debate dates and details of each.

"We moved to Hollywood and mom was pregnant ... maybe she wasn't pregnant yet?" Fran says. "No, she was, she had Chris on the way to Hollywood ..."

"Well, she didn't have him in the car on the way down here," Mike adds, jokingly, teasing his sister's way of phrasing the story. "Chris was born after they had moved here.

"Anyway, the four of us were born [already]," Fran adds.

The back and forth, and loving, way the Galati siblings communicate with one another is a testament to their family bond. And the fun they have with each other.

Michael Sr. was a natural born salesperson, Fran says. He was the dreamer, while Anna Maria provided the support. The backbone of the large family, if you will.

"My father had the vision, and the dream, and my mother was the support system behind him," Fran says.

When the Galatis landed on Anna Maria Island, 53 years ago, there was nothing really there. But there was this small marina, devastated by a hurricane. That marina would go on to be Galati Yachts home.

"All of a sudden, we're living in a storeroom. All seven of us," Fran says. "We went from having our own rooms, and a pool, to living in a storeroom. I just give so much credit to my mother, she says, tearing up. She would be washing dishes at the bait cleaning table. She would make spaghetti and clams, or anything we caught."

Fran recalls her brothers standing guard by the bathroom, accessible from the outside, to protect her from racoons.

"It was our home and our playground," Fran says. "It was a family business from the get-go. We just never realized it."

The Galati playground looked vastly different than the images of playgrounds most people would think of. Filling up boats with gas, fishing and cleaning docks.

"We didn't know we were working," Mike says.

Later, in the 1970s, the Galati family moved away from the storeroom and into a larger duplex apartment. After living in the duplex, the family built a home, which later would become Galati's yacht basin building at its Anna Maria Island location. That building still stands today.

"It never felt like we didn't have anything or that we were struggling," Fran says.

The business began to grow, and evolve, after Galati Yachts

Fran Galati with her children Angela and Jay Dee.





got into selling new boats, in 1976.

It wasn't Galati Yachts yet. The business had a few names during its time. It was known as Anna Maria Yacht Basin, for a while.

After a family vote, which according to Fran and Mike has always resulted in a unanimous decision among the Galatis, Galati Yachts was reborn.

Adding Galati to the name offered a lesson in the value of attaching one's family name to a family business.

"When you want your name on it, you have to deliver to a higher standard," Mike says. "That has been a driving factor for all of us."

In 1992, Michael Sr. passed away, and the business passed down to the five Galati siblings. Over time, each Galati sibling was able to find their "place" in the business.

"There are people that want to know what time it is and there are people that build the watch," Mike says.

Today, the Galati siblings all play a role in the business. Joe and Carmine, the eldest, have split the product lines and handle the sales of their respective

GIVING BACK

Galati Yachts, not surprisingly, has a passion for supporting relief efforts for places hit by natural disasters. Most recently, it provided relief to places hit along the gulf coast by Hurricane Ian.

In addition, it supports Port Tampa Bay in their annual events, like Bayslam Fishing Tournament and the Anchor Ball.

lines. Mike is the service director for all of the Galati locations. They refer to this department as the customer support team, because that's what the team is focused on, servicing the customer, not the boats. Fran is the human resources and information technology director. Chris, the youngest of the siblings, runs the yacht basin and partakes in fishing tournaments.

"We all have our niche that we're really good at," Fran says.

The same trend applies to the, up and coming, third generation.

"The next generation, most are col-

lege graduates and they're all working here," Mike says. All 12 of them.

But both Fran and Mike agree, the Galati family doesn't believe in hand-outs to their own children.

"They all had to earn their way. Nothing was given," Fran says. "Just like us, they had to work for it."

Angela, Fran's daughter and the oldest of the Galati grandchildren to Anna Maria, works in the marketing department, running analytics and the company's customer relationship management program. Jay Dee, Fran's son, runs the Texas dealerships.

And the fourth generation of the Galati family is now being born. Angela has a 2-year-old daughter, Charlotte, and is pregnant with her second child. And Jay Dee has three boys, Luke, 4 years old, Henry, 2 years old, and Wallace, 3 months old.

"They have the same passion that my dad had, that we have," Fran says.

The large Galati family values closeness and sees the benefits that has for

This page: Chris Galati at the Galati Yacht Basin; Opposite page: Fran and Mike Galati.

the future of the business.

"I feel the key to success with having multiple generations working together is you have to have them together, a lot. Our children are like siblings not like cousins," Fran says.

While the third generation has opted to join the family business, it was always an option and not the expectation.

"Don't force it. That would be my suggestion to others with generational leadership, don't force it. Everybody will go to where their strengths are," Mike says.

•

It sounds glamorous on paper, owning a yacht business. But it's hard work.

"We work 24/7 for our customers. We work hard to give them a great boating experience," Fran says. "We work hard and we play hard."

For Fran, fishing is her "play hard" and a great passion of hers.

She's been able to compete in tournaments and, for a while, even held a world record. She caught a gag grouper in June 2001, weighing 38 pounds and 13 ounces. It was, at that time, the world record for a catch of the heaviest fish of a species in its approved line class category.

She since has been beaten, but plans to reclaim it.

One of her favorite fishing experiences was fishing off oil rigs in the Gulf of Mexico. And, she notes, Costa Rica is a great place to fish. But when asked her favorite place to fish?

"In water," Mike answers for her with a laugh.

It's evident the Galati family is full of genuine adoration for each other, appreciation for their parents, and what they built, and a lot of laughter.

"We have a hard time distinguishing between work and family. We can't because it's just our life," Fran says. "Our mission statement is to exceed the expectations of our customers. We're all hands on. It's in all of us."

It's the Galati way. And it works. ♦

