



Photos by Britt Berry/ LNT



The Talley family from left, Joey, Sara, Billy and dad, Bill at back are celebrating 20 years in the boat business at their marine showroom on U.S. 21 in Cornelius. Sara Talley said the family does not have anything special planned to mark the occasion.

Talley family celebrates 20 years in boat business

By Britt Berry
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The colorful writer Mark Twain once said, "Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the things that you did do. So throw off your bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."

On the 20th anniversary of a leap of faith and chance encounter into marine sales and service, Bill and Sara Talley certainly took a page out of Twain's book.

"Bill was in construction and he always owned his own businesses," said Sara Talley. He had garages on the side where he fixed up collector cars. We saw this property and thought it would be a good place for him to do that from," she says of

the lot now directly off of Interstate 77's exit 28 in Cornelius. Bill let his friend who owned a small boat dealership keep some of his boats on the property, and the rest is history.

Today, Talley's Pier 77 Marine is one of the largest exclusive Regal boat dealers. In 2004, Talley's received the accolade of being the number one Regal boat dealer in the Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI), beating out about 150 other dealers worldwide. Bill and Sara Talley run the operation with their 22-year-old twin sons, Joey and Billy.

"Regal is a family business, too," said Sara Talley, "So we work well together with them."

Talley's Pier 77 Marine sells new Regal cruisers, from 19 to 44 feet long, offers

complete basic services, major and minor repairs, a parts department, detailing, inspection service, and transportation anywhere along the eastern seaboard. In 1996, Talley's stationed a service center at King's Point Marina in Cornelius.

"The owners of King's Point approached us," said Sara Talley, "They had a large service building and were looking for someone to run it who could meet their expectations. That service center was positive for us because we could offer even more customer service, both to people who had slips at King's Point and as an on-water service for our customers."

Caring for their customers is second-nature to the Talleys, and it's apparent that the family cares for each other, as well. To work together so closely day in and day out,

they have to.

"It's good and bad," says Sara Talley, "You can tell we're a family."

Sara Talley says that it's difficult sometimes not to bring the business home with them.

"It's hard not to discuss our day over dinner or in a family atmosphere, because we've been working together all day. But sometimes, we're so busy during the day that we don't know what the others have been up to, so we have to ask, "What did you do today?"

Talley's Pier 77 Marine is closed on Mondays so Sara can work as a registered nurse on Sunday nights for fun, what she calls her "night off."

She said the business doesn't have anything special planned for its anniversary.