

# Experience, reliability and innovation since 1975

With over forty years experience, ST.LA. has achieved the expertise and capability to provide simple and complex elements that play an increasingly significant role in vehicle furnishings, such as liftable storage beds and telescopic table supports.

Words Giorgio Carpi



Paolo e Sergio Milianti  
ST.LA. owners

It sometimes happens, albeit not too often, that a company's name in itself already tells its story, as well as its past history and plans for the present and future: this is exactly the case for ST.LA., based in Tuscany, the region in which so many Italian manufacturers in the recreational vehicle sector are situated. So just what does the name ST.LA. stand for? Well it's all very simple, as the company's founder Sergio Milianti explains:

"It's no mystery," says Milianti, "the four letters sum up the words Stampaggio Lamiera [sheet metal stamping], thus ST.LA., which, in a nutshell summarizes the company's initial business and partly its current activities. We started our business 41 years ago, in the sheet metal stamping sector, and soon

discovered that the RV industry, which was expanding rapidly in Italy during the 1970s, was an interesting business opportunity." ST.LA.'s venture thus began by producing articles for the motorhome sector: stakes, poles and spare parts, especially for motorhome tents, which at the time were very popular. However, within a short time, ST.LA. began partnering with Italian manufacturers operating in the RV industry, such as, for example, Roller based in Calenzano, Mobilvetta and Caravans International based in the area of Poggibonsi. In those years, Italian RV manufacturers were producing in full swing, with tens of thousands of



units annually. Thanks to its long standing experience in sheet metal stamping, ST.LA. began supplying wall supports and legs for tables, as well as other steel, and even aluminium compo-

nents. Not too long afterwards, production began on elements comprising beds, and in the meantime a move was made from production for caravans to motorhomes, which affected all businesses in the industry in Italy. "During the '90s, ST.LA. was able to increase production continuously," explains Sergio Milianti, "by around 20%, and even 30% per year. Then, in 2008, the economic crisis hit the RV sector hard, but we managed to keep our share of the market, mostly because we've always been very prudent. We've consistently outsourced our manufacturing





to companies with the necessary expertise and qualifications to produce the very best quality, from moulding to galvanizing treatments, and we've been rewarded for these choices. Indeed, our in-house staff have always done a great job for us: I've sought to instil excellent working relationships with our artisans at all times, and in 41 years in business this attitude has resulted in not even one day of labour strike. I have to say that I'm very satisfied with how things have worked out, and how I've passed the business on to my sons."

Today, ST.LA. srl, which operates almost exclusively for the RV sector (with the exception of small scale production for the nautical sector), is one of three companies comprised in the Milianti Group, together with Tecnometal srl and Forma srl. Together, these businesses make up an annual turnover of 13 million euros, with several production sites: ST.LA.'s production facilities cover an overall area of 4,800 m<sup>2</sup> of covered space and 7,000 m<sup>2</sup> of service areas; Forma's production site covers 1,300 m<sup>2</sup> of warehousing space and 3,000 m<sup>2</sup> of service areas; and Tecnometal is currently transferring to its new location with 2,000 m<sup>2</sup> of covered space and 4,500 m<sup>2</sup> of external service areas.

Production dedicated to the recreational vehicle sector is extremely varied, ranging from metal to plastic elements. Sergio Milianti,

who has recently turned 77, has progressively passed the reins to his sons Paolo, General Manager of ST.LA., and Francesco, Product Manager for the family business.

"Our product catalogue is extremely broad ranging and varied," explains Paolo Milianti, "and the reason for this is that in addition to manufacturing metal products, we also partner with our subsidiary Forma srl for stamping plastic materials, creating, for instance, customized water tanks that fit perfectly with the chassis and on-board furnishings."

A large chunk of production currently caters to beds in recreational vehicles, with unique systems for the movement of beds. A wide range of bed frames with an aluminium structure are produced, and various types of liftable storage beds, both manual and featuring electric movements. A significant portion of production also caters to aluminium ladders for motorhomes. In any case, the product catalogue merely represents a basic overview of ST.LA.'s total output, since a great many variations exist on the standard products.

"We can customize any product to meet our customers' needs," states Paolo Milianti, General Manager of ST.LA. "Especially rather complex items such as tables and beds, working in close collaboration with manufacturers, designing the best solutions for a specific range of vehicles. ST.LA. can guarantee extreme productive flexibility, and we can work with both large quantities and small lots. We take special pride in our punctuality in making deliveries: ensuring prompt customer service is a fundamental and basic requirement; delivery deadlines must absolutely be respected at all costs."

Table supports are among the leading items in ST.LA.'s product catalogue. For instance, the Cosmo 2 model features a single tele-

scopic steel leg and aluminium frame as a tabletop support. A handle set below the tabletop releases the mechanism, enabling the table's lateral movement, as well as the lowering of the telescopic leg. Given the success of the Cosmo 2 model, the Cosmo 3

table support was created, which features a practical pedal system for lowering the telescopic leg (from 71.5 to around 34 cm from the floor).

The rotation and lateral movement of the tabletop (supported by a specially designed aluminium frame) are provided by a handle set underneath the tabletop. The table's fastening and handling systems are produced in many variations, in large scale production lots. In addition to the more evolved models with a telescopic leg, a variety of table fixtures are also produced, while a unique and successful design is the fixed table leg created for McLouis, with a special design feature that is very popular with end users.

As for bed units, which represent the largest percentage of ST.LA.'s production, many variations exist, supplying a variety of manufacturers, including groups such as Trigano, Hymer, Rapido and Pilote. The all-new New York bed unit was presented at the trade fair in Düsseldorf, equipped with a lifting mechanism that makes use of cables instead of belts; production is slated to begin in the coming days. This is an interesting system, since the manual and electric versions don't differ a whole lot, and motorhome manufacturers can vary the solution directly in production (from manual to electric) without incurring excessive costs. Using a belt system, the transformation is difficult, and expensive to implement. The manual bed is equipped with a gas spring and quick cable rewinding system. The lifting action is thus simple, even for older folks, an essential and far from minor detail.

