

Olympic gymnast tests his brokerage mettle

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[Mitch Gaylord](#) knows the thrill of victory probably a little more than most. He won multiple medals, including a gold, at the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles, his hometown.

Instead of flying through the air as a world-class gymnast, Gaylord is now testing his agility of mind and body — and a deep sense of team solidarity — as a commercial real estate broker in Austin.

“It’s so exciting to me,” Gaylord said in an interview at his new office at SkylesBayne, the Austin-based tenant representation brokerage firm. “I haven’t felt excited this much about my career in a long, long time.”

Gaylord’s professional career was launched after he won the team gold medal and several silver and bronze medals. The U.S. gymnastics team hit the road after their stellar Olympic performance — heading to the White House, Disney World and a host of cities where they performed exhibitions.

Soon after, Gaylord was cast as the lead in the 1986 movie “American Anthem,” a sports drama.

“I thought I’d do movies for a very long time, but the movie release was very disappointing,” Gaylord said.

In fact, the reviews were pretty brutal. So Gaylord began flipping houses in his hometown.

Business was brisk.

“We couldn’t finish them fast enough,” he said.

As it always is in real estate, the market eventually tanked and Gaylord lost the financial traction he’d achieved as a successful athlete.

“It just wiped me out,” he said.

Gaylord turned to the motivational speaking circuit. It’s an aspect of his life that continues today.

“I was uncomfortable at first, but I got more comfortable when I just started telling my story versus trying to sound like [Tony Robbins](#),” Gaylord said.

Since physical fitness had always been a big part of his life, he worked with actress and celebrity entrepreneur [Suzanne Somers](#) to roll out the Torso Track ab machine on the Home Shopping Network.

“That opened up a whole new world to me,” Gaylord said. “That product was a big hit, and I learned so much from that experience. I really have a huge entrepreneurial streak. I’m creative and innovative.”

Gaylord then began making his own fitness equipment, such as his “Melt It Off” plan. He sold it on infomercials.

But after getting married a second time, Gaylord and his new spouse, Valentia, decided they didn’t want to raise their small children in Southern California. Gaylord also has older children, with whom he remains close.

Initially the Gaylords moved to Dallas because of job opportunities and other connections.

Kurt Thomas, another former Olympic gold medalist, operates a gymnastic studio in Frisco north of Dallas, and he suggested Gaylord open his own.

But after further research, the Gaylords decided to move to Austin about four years ago. Though the gymnastics studio didn’t come together, the couple opened a successful fitness space in the Hill Country Galleria — The Lagree Studio.

Still, Gaylord longed for more. He discovered how much he enjoyed touring commercial properties when scouting out locations for the fitness business. Along the way, a commercial broker in Dallas introduced Gaylord to Chris Skyles and Justin Bayne, founders of SkylesBayne.

“They have that entrepreneurial spirit and are so smart,” he said.

Though Gaylord is an instructor at The Lagree Studio, he’s working every day with the SkylesBayne team. He confesses he works a lot harder now than he ever did in the aftermath of his Olympic conquests.

“To be honest, I had it really easy for years,” Gaylord said. “[Now] I can’t wait to get in the office every day.”

Jan Buchholz covers commercial and residential real estate, construction and architecture and retail and restaurants for the Austin Business Journal.