



TITO GAONA'S FLYING TRAPEZE ACADEMY

**Florida**

432 Spadaro Drive
Venice, FL 34285
Phone: 941-412-9305
Fax: 941-412-9825

TitoGaona@comcast.net
www.TitoGaona.com

May 14, 2014
Letter of Interest

From Tito Gaona

To : The City of Venice ,& The Venice Airport


By way of this document I would like to express my wishes to stay onsite at the Venice Arena property as I have been for the past 12 years with my school. My family has been in Venice since 1955 and this has been my home for as long as I can remember.

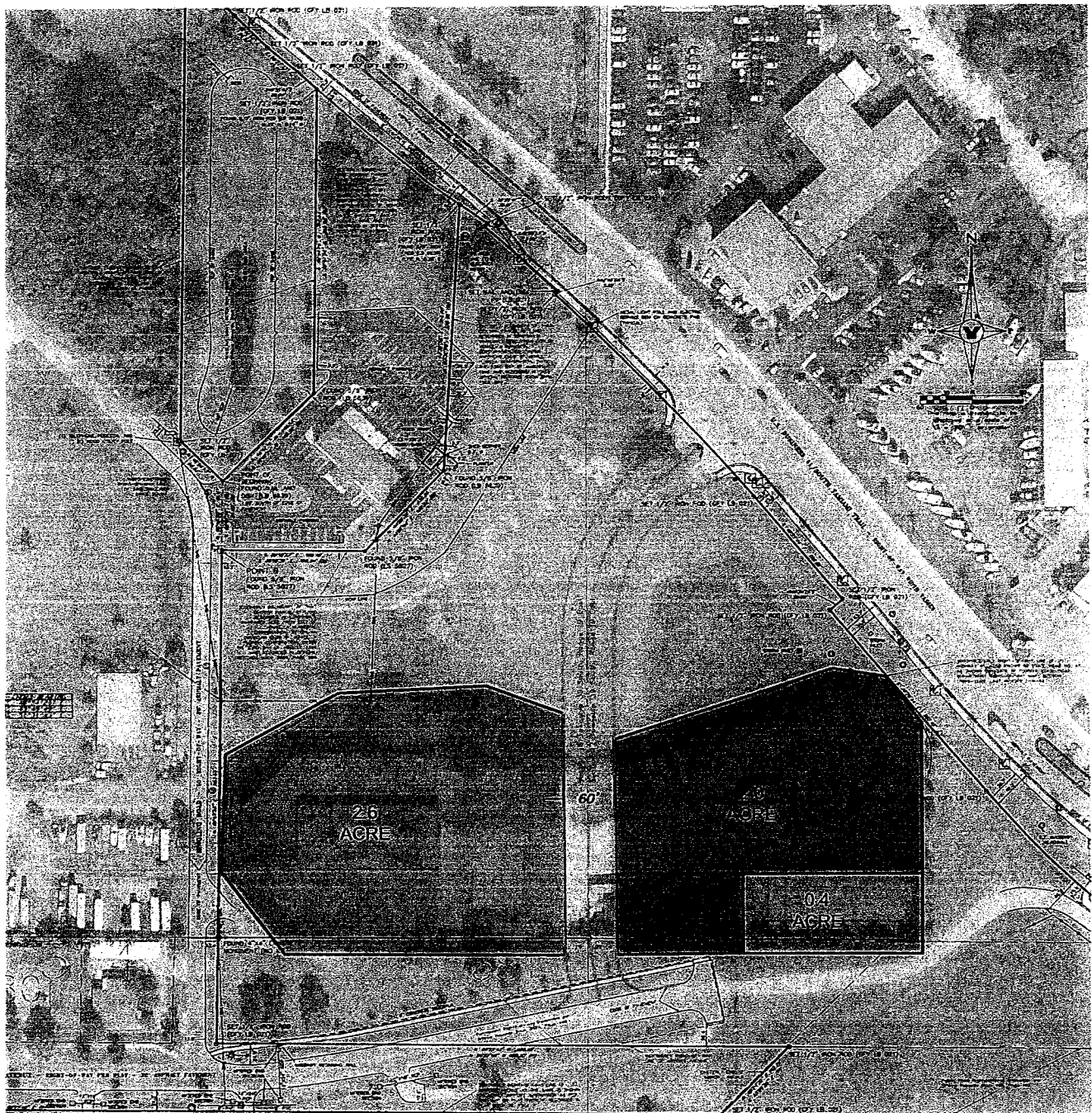
I was part of the Ringling experience at the Arena for many years, and still today am employed by Ringling Barnum and Bailey Circus.

My school has been the welcoming Southern Corridor Gateway to Venice and many people when asked , will remember their positive experience at my school . My wife Renata and our daughter Victoria are a permanent fixture here and we have long been ambassadors for this community . We are on second generation of local and many returning U.S. and International families who participate in classes here . We also welcome many U.S. and International corporate visitors who might not come to Venice for any other reason .

My family and I welcome this new spirit of co-operation with the Venice Golf Adventures LLC, and the Venice Circus Arts Foundation , Inc.,in occupying this site for mutual benefit. It is our hope the City will consider this association in taking on this challenge to make the Southern Gateway to Venice a beautiful and financially fruitful enterprise. The restoration of this site is necessary and will benefit our community . This very large project has proven to be a difficult negotiation up until now. We feel positive that each of our separate entities together can accomplish the goal of total revitalization of the Arena parcel. Please allow my school the opportunity to continue to serve our community

Sincerely ,





SURVEY PROVIDED BY: GEORGE F. YOUNG, INC.



**FLORIDA ENGINEERING
&
SURVEYING, LLC**

631 N. TAMiami TRAIL TEL: (941) 485-3100
NOKOMIS, FLORIDA 34275 FAX: (941) 485-3107

www.flengineeringandsurveying.com

CA #30375 LB #8024

VENICE CIRCUS PROPERTY

RENTAL MAP

Circopedia

Flying Trapeze

By Dominique Jando

The Gaonas are a large Mexican circus family. Seeing as the flying trapeze has long been a specialty of the Mexican circus, it was inevitable that flying acts featuring members of the Gaona family would call themselves, with some legitimacy, the Flying Gaonas. And indeed, this has happened. To the circus world, however, there has been one and only one Flying Gaonas: the act in which, for 35 years, Tito Gaona caught flawless triple somersaults with extraordinary grace and astonishing consistency.

Victor Gaona Murillo was born in 1925 to an old, prolific Mexican circus family that traces its roots to the Circo Gaona y León, created in 1891 by Bernabé Gaona Ramos, a former military officer (whose brother, Rodolfo, was a well-known torero), and Carlos León, a trapeze artist. Victor's father, also named Bernabé, was a celebrated clown in Mexico under the name of Yoyito.

Victor married María Teresa Palencia, who didn't belong to a circus family. Together they had six children: María Guadalupe ("Lupe"), Jorge Armando ("Mando," born November 19, 1943), Silvia Graciela ("Chela," born May 23, 1945), Victor Daniel ("Tito," born August 29, 1947), Ricardo ("Richie," born May 25, 1957), José, and Marco Antonio.

The children weren't thrown immediately into the world of the circus. They went to school like any other kids in their hometown of Guadalajara. During their summer vacations, they visited their father, who toured with various circuses in the United States. But they had circus blood in their veins, and Tito often claimed that, by age three, he already wanted to join the circus. When he saw the film *Trapeze* (1956)—Carol Reed's tale of an aging flyer and his gifted young pupil, starring Burt Lancaster, Tony Curtis, and Gina Lollobrigida—Tito decided he wanted to be a flyer. Or so he claims. By the time the movie came out, he'd already had a taste of the trapeze: in the summer of 1954, at age seven, he was announced as "the world's youngest flyer," with the Flying Valentines at Tom Packs Circus in New Orleans.

From the Titos to the Flying Gaonas

Eventually, Victor put Chela, Mando, and Tito to work on a trampoline act, and the Titos, as the act became known, joined their father in the U.S. Tito had also trained on the flying trapeze with Fidel Farfás, of the Flying Palustres, and Victor had created an aerial casting act for him, with his cousin, Mario Gaona. Meanwhile, Tito's siblings also began to train on the flying trapeze during their spare time. Eventually, the Flying Gaonas made their debut at Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus in Palisades Park, New Jersey, in 1962.

With trapeze legend Fay Alexander as catcher, Tito caught his first double-double (a double somersault with a double twist) that same year. Afterward, Victor acted as the catcher in the act. During that period, the Flying Palacios, with triple-somersaulter Lalo Palacio, were starring in the Ringling show, and the triple, still a rarity at the time, became Tito's goal. He caught it for the first time in 1964. The following year, he added a return to the trapeze bar with a double pirouette, in the manner of the legendary Alfredo Codona. Tito would later make it a triple pirouette.

In the winter of 1962, the Gaonas brought their trampoline and flying acts to Europe, first to Berlin at the Sport Halle, then to Circus Scott in Sweden, where they would return several times. It is at Circus Scott that Tito began to turn the triple consistently. The Gaonas also worked at Circus Krone in Munich, and in the winter of 1965-66, they appeared with Bertram Mills Circus for its final season under the management of Cyril and Bernard Mills at London's Olympia. There, the Gaonas performed their acts for Queen Elizabeth II and her family.

In 1966, the Gaonas signed a contract with Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey, which John Ringling North had just sold to Irvin and Israel Feld. They would stay with the Ringling show until 1978, becoming the

leading star act of the circus's Blue Unit. In 1974, the Ringling show featured two Flying Gaonas acts: the original one and a second troupe led by their cousin, Francisco Gaona. This would be the first, but not the last, appearance of another troupe calling itself the Flying Gaonas.

The Elusive Quadruple

When Victor "Papa" Gaona retired from the act in 1975, he was replaced by Manuel Zuniga for one year, then by the Gaonas's cousin, Lalo Murillo. It was with Lalo Murillo, and under the guidance of legendary triple-somersaulter Antoinette Concello, that Tito began working, in 1977, on the still-unattained quadruple somersault. After endless practice sessions before or after the show, he was able to turn it, but not catch it. He attempted it at every performance during the 1977-78 season, but to no avail. Despite Tito's inability to perform the feat, the audience got an added thrill out of the attempt.

In December 1978, the Flying Gaonas participated in the International Circus Festival of Monte-Carlo, winning the circus world's highest award, the coveted GoldClown. After they left the Ringling show, they starred in a Feld-produced show, the short-lived Cirque International de Monte-Carlo. Then they went to work internationally, notably with Circus Knie in Switzerland and back with Circus Scott in Sweden.

The composition of the troupe changed in 1980, when Richie Gaona—who had been flying for the past three years at Circus World, the Feld-owned circus-themed amusement park in Orlando, Florida—joined the troupe to replace Mando as a flyer. Mando, who had been a gifted, remarkably elegant flyer, became the act'scatcher.

In 1981, the Flying Gaonas began a long association with the Big Apple Circus, appearing in its Lincoln Center holiday productions and, until 1987, on tour. They did their last season in Brazil in 1997. Afterward, Mando went on to manage a custom motor-home company in Florida, Chela settled in Venice, Florida, and Richie became a stuntman in Hollywood, before opening a trapeze school in Woodland Hills, California. Tito wrote his memoirs and opened his own trapeze schools in Venice, Florida, and Boston, Massachusetts.

In 1982, Mexican flyer Miguel Vazquez, of the Flying Vazquez, caught the impossible quadruple somersault. Flying trapeze entered a new era. But until then, and even after, the Flying Gaonas were in a league of their own. There was of course Tito's extraordinary charisma, his ease and elegance, and his impeccable triples; but style and elegance were a characteristic of all Gaonas. "Break your neck," Victor was fond of saying, "but point your toes!" Mando and Richie were also supremely elegant flyers, and Richie's triple, which he rarely did after he joined his brothers, was flawless. Theirs was an act that became a beacon for a generation of flyers and was one of the greatest flying acts of circus history.