

Everglades Island home for sale at \$39 million

palmbeachdailynews.com/story/business/real-estate/2023/05/25/palm-beach-real-estate-everglades-island-home-39-million-has-seven-bedrooms-water-access/70236578007

REAL-ESTATE

Palm Beach real estate: Bermuda-style house for sale at \$39 million

The seven-bedroom, five-and-a-half-bathroom home has 6,207 square feet of living space inside and out.

Christine Davis

Special to the Daily News



Cornie and Dick Thornburgh are giving up their Everglades Island water views for in-town living.

“We found a bungalow in town,” Cornie says. “Our daughters are no longer college-age, and we don’t have quite the activity that necessitates as many bedrooms. We also would like to do more traveling rather than hosting.”

Thus, their gut-renovated seven-bedroom, five-and-a-half-bathroom Bermuda-style home at 550 Island Drive in the Estate Section has been put on the market, priced at \$39 million. With 6,207 square feet of living space inside and out, the house is offered through Brown Harris Stevens agents Liza Pulitzer and Whitney McGurk.

The Thornburghs had previously owned a landmarked house in Midtown designed by a noted architect, Marion Sims Wyeth.

“This is our 12th season in Palm Beach,” Cornie says. “We brought up the kids in New York City, and when our youngest graduated from high school, we came here for the warmer climate. We purchased a Wyeth four-bedroom home on Golfview (Road), but when our three daughters with their pals visited, it would get cramped.”

So, when the house on Island Drive became available, the number of bedrooms — five in the main house and two in the guest-house-and-cabana — were a plus, with the added value of 150 feet of frontage on the Intracoastal Waterway on the east side of Everglades Island. Standing on a lot of about a half-acre, the house faces the canal that separates the island from the Everglades Golf Course.

“I love being on the water. I grew up on the water, and our other home in Connecticut is on the water, and this house has great views of the Intracoastal, the golf course, bird life and all the things that appealed to us. We are paddleboarders and kayakers,” Cornie says.

The house — built in 1955 — needed plenty of work when the Thornburghs bought it in 2014.

“This house was dated and a bit of a wreck,” she says. “We saw that it was a project, but we also knew it was a special place.”

After listing their Golfview home, and with their bid on the Island Drive home accepted, the Thornburghs assembled their team for the renovations.

They began with architect Jacqueline Albarran, who “put together a nice plan for us, and we hired Tim Givens, a phenomenal builder. They put together the house as it is now, and we’ve been satisfied with it,” Cornie says.

The entry opens east to the living and dining rooms, which access the poolside lanai. To one side of this central area are the kitchen, breakfast room and laundry room, as well as two bedrooms and the two-car garage. On the opposite side of the house are two guest bedrooms and a den.

Upstairs, the main bedroom suite, with two walk-in closets and a bathroom, accesses a water-view balcony. Adjacent to the pool is the guest-house-and-cabana.

Interior details include wide-plank hardwood floors, limed-wood vaulted ceilings and gas fireplaces in the living room and lanai. The kitchen is finished with custom cabinetry, brushed-velvet granite counters and Wolf stainless appliances. The bathrooms are tiled.

“Not one thing went untouched,” Cornie says about the gut renovation. Going on to explain her vision, she adds: “In our Connecticut home, when you walk in the front door, the eye is targeted directly to the infinity pool right to the water. We wanted the same thing here. The whole notion is: This is a house on and of the water.

“Also, I wanted the lines of the house to reflect a Bermudian feel, so it has a slurry roof like you’d see in Bermuda.”

There was one other problem. The floor plan was unwieldy, especially for gatherings. “It was a bit of a rabbit warren. I wanted to improve the flow,” she explains.

“We have had parties here for 100 people, and now the house flows well. In so many big houses, you ramble around, but this house is cozy and comfortable when there’s no kids around and it’s just the two of us.”

The Thornburghs installed all new systems, a pool, and two boat ramps for paddleboarding and kayaking. The landscaping plan was designed by Alan Stopek, and the drive is now paved in tabby shells, with part of the old driveway removed and replaced by a secret garden.

While this house, which they’ve named “Pelican Strait,” has been enjoyable — a natural paradise that attracts bountiful wildlife, including pelicans, other birds, manatees and eagle rays — the Thornburghs are ready to move on.

“This has been a great chapter for us, but I’m excited about our next chapter, with a whole new style living,” Cornie says. “I think that’s what keeps life fresh. Life is like a novel with many chapters, and we are going from island living to in-town living.”