

PHOTOS **GEORGE KAMPER**

MARTHA JOLICOEUR:

THE EVOLUTION OF A HORSE HAVEN

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Martha Jolicoeur discusses the real estate market in Wellington, Florida.

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JOLICOEUR was first introduced to the equestrian mecca that is Wellington, Florida, it looked slightly different than it does today. It was a modest, horse-show community just beginning to crop up in south Florida with unbridled—and perhaps unrecognized—potential.

The year was 1979, and Martha was a junior rider making a name for herself. She stayed in Palm Beach Polo and Country Club during that first year, and she has not missed a season since. It was then that she fell in love with Wellington, but it would take many years for it to become her home.

Martha grew up in Westport, Connecticut, located in the heart of northeastern horse country. For her, riding felt like a natural step, and was one that rewarded her from the moment



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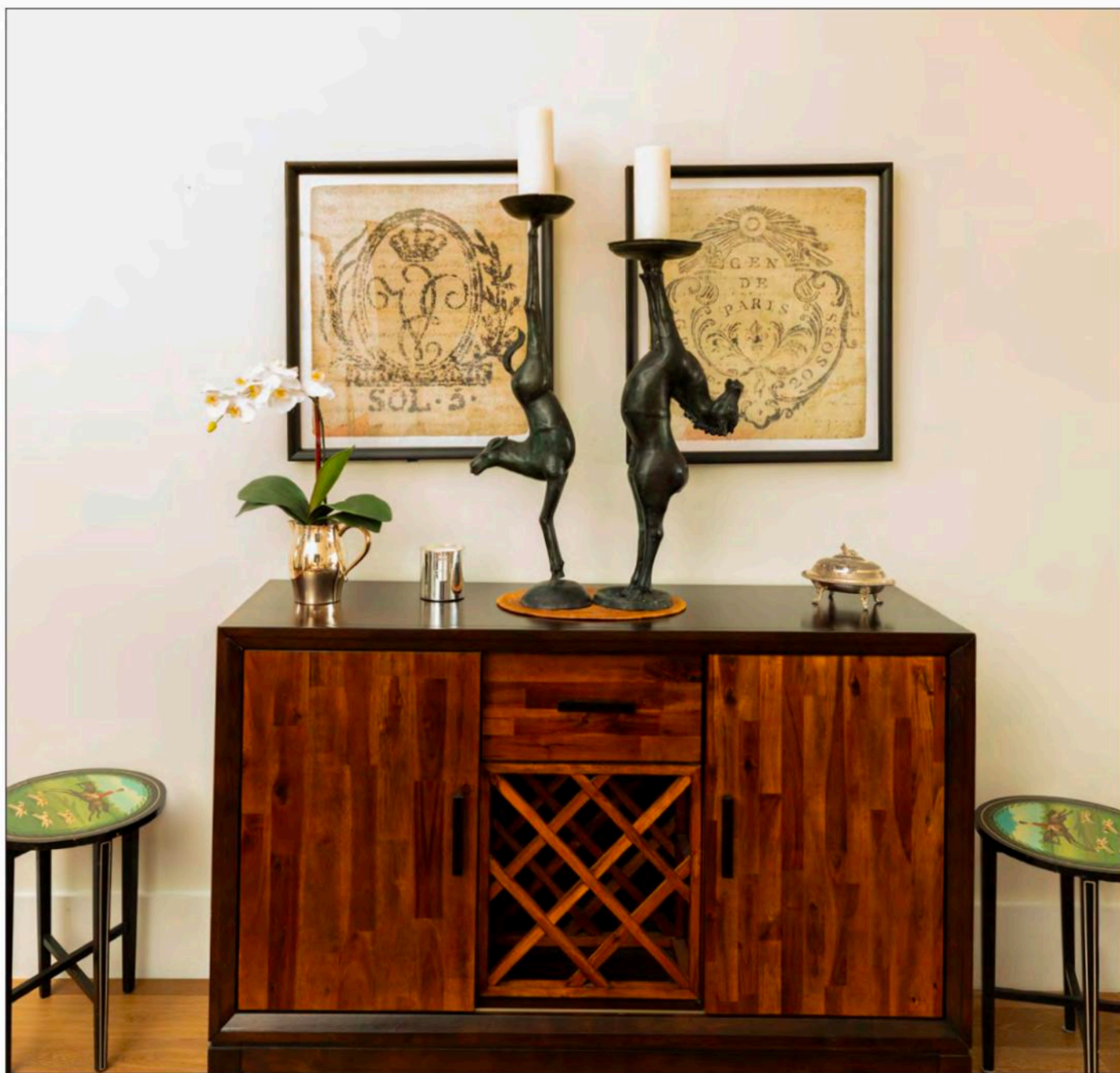


she climbed onto the back of a horse as a child, riding felt like a natural step that rewarded her. She was named best child rider at the Pennsylvania National Horse Show in 1978. While attending college at St. Lawrence University in Canton, New York, Martha saw a future in show jumping and began training with 10-time Canadian Olympian Ian Millar. In 1985, the American Grand

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There was no doubt in Martha's mind that Wellington was where she belonged.

Prix Association (AGA) named Martha its rookie of the year.

In 1991, Martha came to a crossroads in her career and began balancing her time in the saddle with work in residential equestrian real estate. She had settled into another equestrian-centric community, with a farm in Culpeper and an office in Middleburg, Virginia. She sold properties in the northeast during the year and transitioned to Florida real

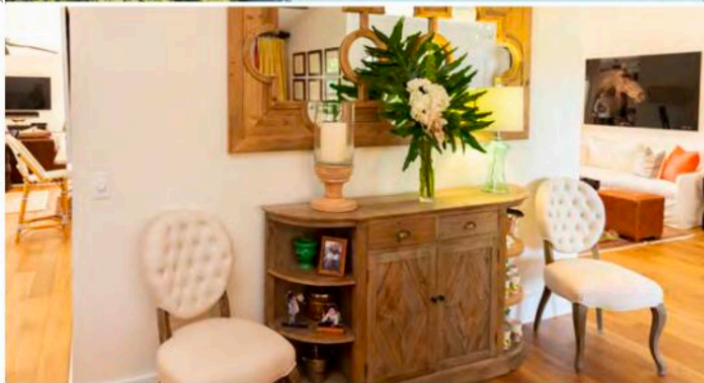


estate when she made her annual winter pilgrimage to Wellington.

"In 2005, I decided to make a big change," recalls Martha. "I was riding my horse at the peak of a hill on our Virginia farm, and thought to myself, 'I really want to be successful in real estate.' I got off the horse that day, we sold our farm, and moved to Wellington! From then on, real estate became my competitive sport."

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Martha has transformed
the home into a lakeside
retreat.

There was no doubt in Martha's mind that Wellington was where she belonged, and she admits that it had been calling her ever since her first winter in the show ring as a child. Those years of immersion gave her a unique understanding of Wellington's evolution, both in horse sport and real estate.



“Wellington was founded by Bill Ylvisaker when he brought polo here,” said Martha. “It was founded around horses, and without them, Wellington would be the same as Royal Palm or anywhere else in South Florida. Now, it truly is the winter equestrian capital of the world!”

In the beginning, the rental market in Wellington was booming. Horse shows are a traveler’s paradise, and while Martha has settled into a quaint home in Wellington, it was still a temporary stop on a year-long travel schedule for most.

“When I started focusing solely on

Photos Top Row: Beezie Madden with Martha receiving the Martha Jolicoeur Leading Lady Rider Award at WEF; The airy kitchen in Martha’s Wellington home; Alexandra Thornton and Charielle receiving the award. Lower row: Details from Martha’s home, including a clock (fourth photo) that was the Seiko Trophy from the National Horse Show of 1985.

Wellington real estate, there was a boom in the market; you listed things, and they sold right away,” said Martha, who is now a member of the elite Douglas Elliman Real Estate Sports and Entertainment Division. “But, the shift that we saw during that time as the show jumping, dressage, and polo events grew, is that more people wanted to settle in Wellington.

“Growth has been the biggest facilitator for a healthy market in Wellington,” she continued. “At first, people were renting more than buying, but today more people are buying, because they realize the horse



show is here to stay, and they spend more nights of the year in Florida than any other location. I would say that a sizable number of equestrians have someplace to call home in Wellington.”

With the expansion of Wellington’s equestrian community, Wellington transitioned from a stop on the tour to a winter home. That is when Martha saw a boom in farm sales. While space is not abundant enough for expansive rolling pastures, Wellington was uniquely and intentionally designed as a home for horses. Communities like Palm Beach

Point, Mallet Hill, and Appaloosa Trail became mini versions of Kentucky, Westchester, and Northern Virginia.

Today, Martha has transformed the home she bought in Wellington into a lakeside retreat from the bustling horse world with nods to her career in the tack. Mementos from big wins and special moments can be found throughout the home. Similarly, Wellington has experienced its own transformation from just another horse show community to the hub of North American sport.

“I am a horsewoman, and I

understand what equestrian clients need and want for their horses and their families,” said Martha. “That understanding puts me in front of a very specific audience, but it is an audience that speaks the same language, and that is the language of the horse. For me, Wellington is a unique and fabulously special place because it is not dedicated to one discipline. One can find show jumping, dressage, polo, racing, and everything in between here. That gives it a real sense of community that is unlike anywhere else in the world.” **EQ+** INFO | PAGE 94