

Details! ‘Miss Gramercy’ Sparks Bidding War; Stone Phillips Wins With \$4.9 M.

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With less than half a dozen penthouses around insular Gramercy Park, high-end buyers are likely to turn carnivorous when one becomes available.

Penthouse A at **45 Gramercy Park North** had not been on the market since the mid-1960s, so naturally when the terraced two-bedroom was listed at the end of April for \$4.75 million, it took only two weeks to get a contract signed.

“It’s very rare that they come up, so the demand is very high,” **Lynne Lerner**, the **RES Sales and Marketing Corporation** listing agent, told *The Observer*. So high that it touched off a dramatic bidding war that pitted former *Dateline NBC* co-anchor **Stone Phillips** and his wife, **Debra**, against a high-end plumbing tycoon who did not take too kindly to no. *The Times* recently revealed Mr. and Ms. Phillips as the buyers, but *The Observer* learned that the victors paid a final price of **\$4.9 million**.

Before that happened, though, according to sources close to the deal, an onerous love triangle erupted when the losing bidder tried everything from wooing brokers involved under false pretenses to offering to raise his bid to \$5.7 million.

To no avail.

The estate selling the park-view place (pictured) respected the agreement made with the Phillipses, causing the ambitious mogul, who until recently was the president of a plumbing concern that provided saunas and steam rooms for 15 Central Park West, to blow his top.

In one correspondence, the mogul described his pursuit of the penthouse as love at first sight and noted that while losing to rivals had never been easy for him, this loss was particularly stinging considering his generous price offer. He ended his forlorn missive with a hope to forget the allure of “Miss Gramercy” to his senses. (**Brown Harris Stevens’ John Burger**, who represented the Phillipses, declined to comment.)

Miss Gramercy sold in mid-May, though it wasn’t until recently that Mr. Phillips’ former apartment, a full-floor loft at **8-10 West 19th Street**, sold. According to city records, the former Yale football quarterback and philosophy major sold that 4,000-square-foot place for **\$4.5 million** to **Alan Colberg**, the global financial services chief of Bain & Company, and his wife, **Chi Claire**.

Mr. Phillips, whose Ken-like features placed him in the canon of all-American newsmen Adonises, bought the loft for \$4.4 million in 2005, and originally listed it in the fall of 2009 for \$4.995 million with **Corcoran’s Steven Cohen**, who reverentially described the space—where the audio, video, central air, fireplaces and curtains are all conveniently operated by wall-mounted Crestron panels—as “a big beautiful open loft coupled with private living.”

The Colbergs, who are moving to New York from Atlanta with their kids, looked at 75 apartments over 18 months, Mr. Colberg confessed to *The Observer*. “We tried to get a feel for neighborhoods. We soon realized we wanted to be south of midtown.” The family, who have already moved into the recently renovated loft, are looking forward to movie nights in the soundproofed high-tech media room, with electric shades and a custom-size nook for a 65-inch flat-screen TV. “My wife is the real movie buff,” Mr. Colberg said, specifying that her preferences are for foreign and independent films.

The master suite includes a fireplace and Brazilian Paduk flooring, as well as a windowed spa bathroom with heated flooring, an “extra large” steam shower and a Jacuzzi tub—presumably not the handiwork of the spurned Gramercy over-bidder.

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