

Longwood estate of late philanthropist, with showstopper closet, sells for \$1 million

[growthspotter.com/news/notable-home-sales/gs-news-harriett-lake-notable-home-closet-20221213-bzdgfzj2jndy5lovpg34fvffou-story.html](https://www.growthspotter.com/news/notable-home-sales/growthspotter.com/news/notable-home-sales/gs-news-harriett-lake-notable-home-closet-20221213-bzdgfzj2jndy5lovpg34fvffou-story.html)

Notable Home Sales
By Tiffani Sherman

Growthspotter

•

Dec 13, 2022 at 4:29 pm



Orlando developer Hymen Lake built this custom four-bedroom home for his wife, Harriett, in 1986.
(Karen Williams)

A house with a closet bigger than most studio apartments just sold for \$1 million.

The home on River Bend Court in The Springs neighborhood of Longwood was once the home of the late philanthropist Harriett Lake and her husband, Hymen.

“They would entertain frequently at the home with big dinner parties and extravagant events. The pool area can probably hold 200 people as well as a huge dining room,” said Scott Taylor, who along with Dawn Evans represented the buyers. Both are with Florida Premier Realty Group, Inc. “As I walked through the house, you could just tell that there’s definitely history there with Orlando folks and I think it’s a landmark property.”

Hymen Lake was a developer and builder who completed this 5,282-square-foot home for himself and his family in 1986. He passed away in 2010.

“The house was pretty much ahead of its time. Back in the mid-1980s, 12, 14, or 16-foot ceilings for a one-story house was pretty much unheard of,” Taylor told **GrowthSpotter**, adding the house also has high-end finishes and quality construction.

The Lakes were active in many arts groups in Central Florida and around the country, with several arts entities named after them and others, like the Harriett Theatre at Mad Cow Theatre in downtown Orlando and Harriett’s Bar at the Lowndes Shakespeare Center are named for her.

Harriett Lake passed away in July 2018 at the age of 96.

She was known for her fashion, especially distinctive hats, which precipitated the need for the gigantic 512-square-foot closet in this home.

“I think its square footage and proportions are as big as a garage. It’s massive and the motorized rack has two levels,” Taylor explained. “I’m sure that was all full at some point with all of Mrs. Lake’s belongings, clothing, hats, shoes, and all kinds of things.”

Her obituary said Harriett Lake once raised \$40,000 for the trauma center at Orlando Regional Medical Center by selling her clothes at a “Harriett’s Closet” sale in 2015.

The buyers, Steven and Dawn Ruoff, loved the closet and the rest of the four-bedroom home. Taylor said they plan to live in the home full time and it was love at first sight.

“The day it was listed, the buyers came that day and we secured the house the next day,” Taylor said, adding the list price was \$995,000 but the buyers thought they would go in at an even \$1 million.

Taylor said the 2.54 acres along the Little Wekiva River give the home beautiful views and peacefulness.

“[I was] just amazed at how beautiful the park-like setting is. There are sculptures from different artists. It’s just so private and serene,” he said. “[The buyers] loved the location. That was probably the biggest key in their decision making to go ahead and buy the house.”

This is the first time the home has been for sale. The Lakes' daughter Shelly never lived in the home, but replaced many of the mechanicals before putting it up for sale.

The home has a newish roof, a resurfaced pool, new HVAC, new plumbing, and other updates.

It needs some aesthetic updates.

“It’s a little bit tired in some of the decor and those are things that [the buyers] are going to update over time,” Taylor said. “They’re trying to evaluate now what they’re going to change and like anybody, they want to make it their own.”

The seller was represented by Kathy Williams of Compass Florida.
