

Like Michael Milken and Leona Helmsley, Martha is likely headed to a 'Club Fed.' The inmates are already expecting her.

Home Away From ...

BY DANIEL MCGINN

It's just 25 miles from Martha Stewart's country manse in Bedford, N.Y., to the minimum-security women's federal prison camp at Danbury, Conn. But for a woman used to unparalleled luxury, her likely future home will seem a world apart. Assuming the judge doesn't buy her pleas for leniency—or order her to a higher-security facility—Stewart is probably facing time in a prison camp. While there are other suitable facilities in West Virginia, most experts point to Danbury—which housed Leona Helmsley and the Rev. Sun Myung Moon—as her likely destination because it's close to her family.

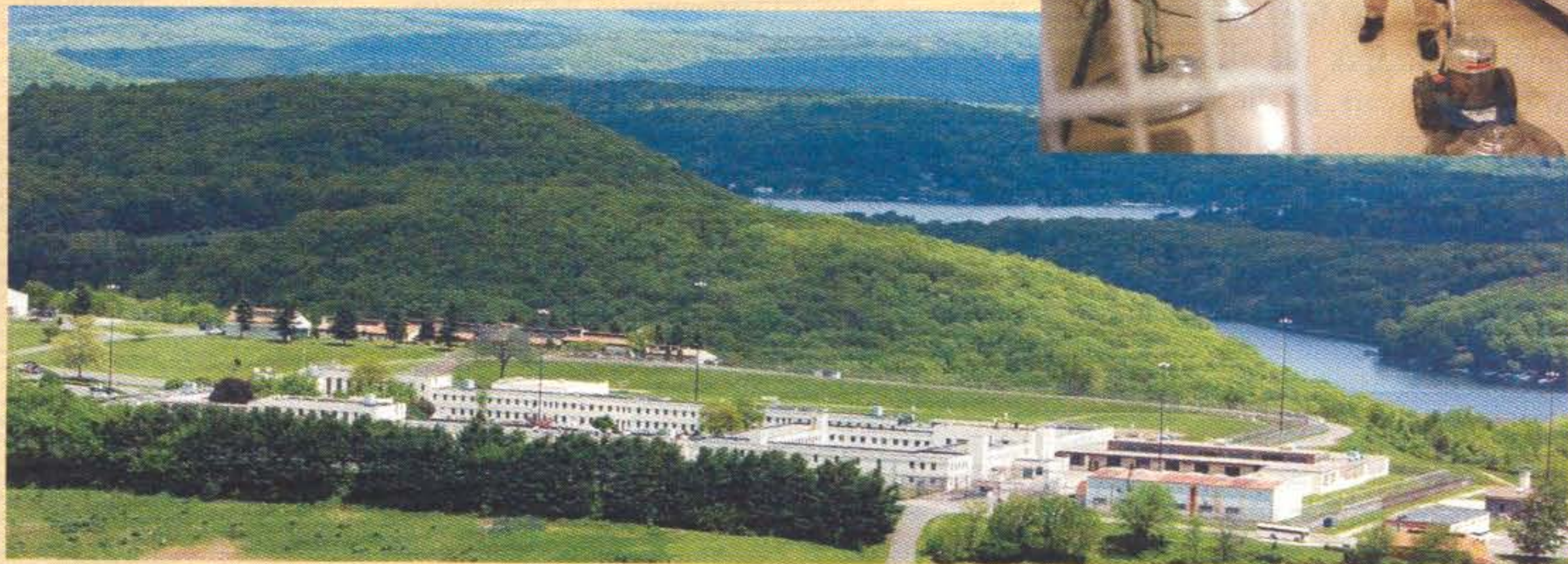
According to Danbury alumni, the women's camp has no fences or barred cells; instead of break-outs, guards have worried about nearby residents trespassing to enjoy the lake. "Campers"—most in for immigration or drug charges—sleep in small, bunk-bedded dorm rooms

(some house eight women apiece) and spend their days in the kitchen or maintaining the grounds. For recreation, there are two TV lounges, a law library, a track, and a gymnasium used for Pilates, yoga, dancersize or aerobics (but not tai chi, which the Feds have deemed a martial art). There's no e-mail or cell phones (and long waits for pay phones), and guards discourage friendships by rotating bunk-mates frequently. But Caryl Hartjes, a Wisconsin nun who spent three months at Danbury last year

after being arrested during a protest, remembers small pleasures, like the birthday party inmates threw for her. She says the inmates have been anticipating Martha's arrival. "They just assumed she was guilty," Hartjes says. "Their feeling was she'll be one of them. Prison is a great equalizer, and her money isn't going to help her one bit."

Where money will help her is at the commissary, where she'll buy cigarettes (handy if she wants to pay cash-strapped inmates to

Room With a View: The bucolic minimum-security prison in Danbury, Conn., offers Pilates classes, but requires a bit of work, too



make her bed) and fresh fruit (a prized commodity). But regardless of her bank account, Stewart will be dealing with no-nonsense guards who'll search her before and after visitations and shackle her if she leaves the facility for a doctor's visit. "To classify any of the federal prison camps as 'Club Fed' or to imply there's any sense of civility or decency about them is not right," says Herb Hoelter of the National Center on Institutions and Alternatives, who represented Helmsley, Michael Milken and Ivan Boesky at their sentencing. Looking ahead, the woman who built an empire dealing out tips on better living may want to phone some of those prison-camp grads for tips on surviving the next chapter of her complex life.

