

West 104th Street

BLOCK ASSOCIATION

May 24, 2002

NEWSLETTER

Editor: Nancy Lian

Layout and Design: John Johnston

A Challenge Grant for Challenging Times

The block association board is very grateful for your support this year. Even as the city and all of us begin to recover from the difficult events of the fall, contributions have fallen off. We don't want to curtail any of the functions that have made this block such a special, beautiful, and homey place to return to each day.

From now to the end of June, we're in a challenge grant period. Here's the deal: if 20 block residents contribute \$50 over the suggested annual amount of \$100, a block resident will contribute \$500. (315 RSD and 895 WEA residents: contribute \$25 over your own personal contribution of \$50.) As an incentive for making this additional donation, we'll give you an autographed copy of block resident Ned Barnard's full-color, pocket field guide to New York City's trees, the featured Fall book of Columbia University Press.

If you've overlooked your 2002 contribution, this challenge period is a great time to catch up — and get a free copy of Ned's very special book. Any amount you can send is greatly appreciated. You are keeping the block — your home — lovely and safe. Use the convenient enclosed envelope and the contribution slip on the back page. Thank you!

Teresa Elwert

Dust in the Air

Two buildings on our block — 309 West 104 and 315 Riverside Dr. — are doing façade work that generates dust. You may want to close windows that face the buildings and clean more frequently the filters in air conditioners in those windows. 309 W 104 will be installing a sidewalk bridge in connection with their facade work. As with all such bridges, use caution when walking under it. Our security guard has been instructed to keep a close eye on activity under the bridge.

Don't Answer That Phone!

Thanks to the Telemarketing and Consumer Fraud and Abuse Act, which took effect April 1, 2002, New Yorkers who place their names on a "Do Not Call" registry will no longer receive unsolicited phone calls from telemarketing companies. Now you can enjoy your dinner without interruption! Call the New York State Consumer Protection Board at 1.800.697.1220 to register or visit the website at

www.consumer.state.ny.us.

Yard Sale Vendors: Mark Your Calendar!

Our 13th annual Yard Sale will take place Saturday, October 5 (rain date October 6) from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on 104th St. between West End and Riverside. If you're interested in buying a space, be aware that each year we sell out — as much as two weeks prior. Block residents have the right to reserve a space before the general public between August 1 and 14. Mail your \$35 payment to Marsha Tantleff, the vendor coordinator. There's a limit of one space at the \$35 rate; each additional space costs \$50. Complete details, including the required vendor agreement, are available on our web site: www.bloomingdale.org > For vendors

The Silent Auction Needs Your Stuff

Don't get rid of that kid's bike! Hang onto that old trunk! Help us help the block. The Yard Sale's Silent Auction is looking for items in good condition to raise money for the Block Association. We'd love to have gear for children (maybe a stroller, crib or bike in near-mint condition?), the kitchen (that food processor you never used) or antiques (the Fiesta ware bowl that doesn't go with anything, the great old trunk you were going to store in the cellar). We're also looking for leads on fun big-ticket items (an elegant dinner at a fine restaurant, an all-inclusive Caribbean weekend) that will make a extra-big splash. Help us get together some really great stuff and raise lots of money. If you have something you'd like to donate, or if you know someone who might be feeling generous, please send an e-mail to:

Hanna.Rubin@verizon.net.



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A Book Started in This Newsletter Will Be Published This Fall by Columbia University Press

By Ned Barnard

I am arriving at the end of a long journey. I have spent the last four years of my life writing and illustrating a field guide to New York City trees. It's a little book that can easily fit in your pocket, only 240 pages long. I know some of my friends can't understand why the job has taken so long. My excuse is that I had a lot to learn and many miles to go.

When I started thinking about the book back in the spring of 1998, I could identify only a few trees. I knew an oak from a beech, but I couldn't distinguish a red oak from a black oak or a European beech from an American. I tried identifying trees in Riverside park using two popular tree guides that I owned, but I found that the real leaves I picked up in the park didn't look quite like the ideal leaves pictured in the guides. Also, there were exotic trees in the parks that simply weren't in the guides, and there were lots of trees in the guides that probably weren't in the parks because they were Southern trees or Midwestern trees. Using the existing guides, therefore, was a very confusing, frustrating business. I was unhappy with the way my tree guides were organized, too. The plates with pictures of the leaves were bunched together and separated from explanatory text, so I spent most of my time thumbing around futilely trying to identify a tree, first going to the plates, then to the text, and seldom coming away feeling that I had made a positive identification.

Being an old nature book editor, I decided that I could do a better job myself. I would create a tree guide just for the New York City metropolitan area. It would have everything about each species in one place, and it would show variations in leaf shape for those species with notoriously variable leaves. At the time I was a board member of the West 104th Street Block Association, so I asked Teresa Elwert, the president, if she would allow me to write little articles on trees for the Association's newsletter. She graciously agreed. If she hadn't, I probably wouldn't have pursued the book idea, but having to meet deadlines every month set by Nancy Lian, the newsletter's very patient and persistent editor, and by John Johnston, its hard working production editor, kept me focused.

I put together a book proposal and showed it to a couple of downtown book editors. They were unenthusiastic: Why would anyone buy this book when there are already several tree guides out there? The book is too limited in scope, covering only the metropolitan area. There are too many color pictures. The book would be too expensive to sell well. I was a bit discouraged at the poor reception, but I moved ahead anyway, thinking that I would self publish since no commercial publisher was interested.

I called the Parks & Recreation Department on a whim and asked to speak with its chief forester, Fiona Watt, a woman I had read about in the Times. She invited me in to talk with her and her colleague Jennifer Greenfeld, director of the New York Tree Trust. They were enthusiastic, and we quickly agreed on a *modus operandi*. I would write and produce the book; Parks & Recreation would edit it, receive a royalty to sponsor it, and be responsible for checking its accuracy and verifying the locations of tree species throughout the City. I was buoyed by the official support, and Parks & Recreation was happy to be getting a book that would promote appreciation of trees and perhaps make the Department a little bit of money besides.

That was just two years ago. Since then my days and nights have been largely devoted to the book. The best part of the job has been the hundreds of hours in the field visiting, sometimes over and over again, more than 50 parks and preserves, trudging repeatedly over the routes for the book's 10 mapped tree walks, collecting many hundreds of botanical samples, and taking thousands of portrait photographs and close-ups of the leaves, bark, and flowers of the 125 species covered in the species entries. Toward the end of the task, when most of the pages were completed, I contacted Robin Smith, senior executive science editor at Columbia University Press. He and his colleagues liked the idea of an NYC tree guide and the look of the pages and have agreed to publish the book. Now it is in its final production stages and files will shortly go to the Hong Kong printer, who promises bound books in time for a fall publication. Without the Block Association's support, it never would have happened.

Books, glorious books

Hold on to your surplus books just a little longer and the block association will sell them at the October Yard Sale. We'll let you know in September where and when to drop them off.

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EXTRACT FROM NEW YORK MAGAZINE DATED SEPT-15-97

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NEW YORK

Mamá's Boys
Juan Rojas Campos and his brother Bernabe grew up with six brothers in a tiny Mexican village, where their mother taught them to cook. Now, with their brother-in-law, the hermanos have opened Mamá Mexico, a festive cantina with a roster of frozen margaritas, a colorful mural of Mexican village life, and a strolling mariachi singer. The extensive menu ranges from the traditional (nachos, burritos) to the less familiar (grilled marinated rack of lamb and red-snapper soup). (2672 Broadway, near 102nd Street.) Extract from New York magazine dated September 15, 1997.

DAILY NEWS
VIVA
"Incredible Array of Yummy Dishes"

el diario LA PRENSA
El más auténtico sabor poblano

CRAIN'S
NEW YORK BUSINESS
Mexican network takes fresh root in northern climes

MANHATTAN
spirit
Margarita Heaven

ZAGAT SURVEY 2000
"Strong, tall margaritas" and huge sangrias fuel the "fiesta" feel of this winning Upper West Side Mexican that also showcases an "over-the-top" mariachi band on Fridays, compadres commend the "fab staff" - and only "wish the place weren't so popular."

The New York Times
Friendly and Likable...
Spicing Is Tame but
Drinks are Potent

NEW YORK POST
Cheap Eats
The Mama of All Fiestas
Mariachis - Three Stars and More

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Dead tree removed

The dead tree in the front of 318 W. 104th St was recently removed by the Parks Department on the orders of Adrian Benepe, the Parks Commissioner. It's hard to know exactly why this tree—one of three London Planes on the south side of the street—died while its neighbors remain healthy. London Planes are susceptible to anthracnose. Teresa Elwert, one of several certified citizen pruners on the block, speculates a lack of water in the past few years contributed to its demise. Parks will replace the tree, probably this year.

Tree watering program

Our 10 young trees need at least 20 gallons of water each week. Each Saturday morning from 8:00 to 9:00, Teresa Elwert will water four to six of the trees, depending on how much rain has fallen that week. Teresa can use your help in this work, this meditation that protects our considerable investment in the trees. She's reachable at 212 866 4260 or telwert@hotmail.com.

Where have all the flowers gone?

Because of the drought, the block association, like many throughout the city, does not plan to plant impatiens in our tree gardens this summer. Impatiens - those ubiquitous, long-lasting displays of color - are heavy consumers of water. Planting them this summer would be civically irresponsible and a waste of your dues contributions. Instead, mulch will be spread in the tree gardens. As Dora Galitzki wrote in The New York Times on April 18, "Any new plants, even those that are drought resistant, need regular watering to become established. Whether they need a lot or a little, they take their water from the limited supply that would otherwise go to the tree...Mulch solves the problem of looking at bare soil while it cools and holds moisture. Instead of the water being taken by the annuals, the more valuable tree is enjoying it all."

But if the drought eases early enough in the season, we'll plant flowers, ivy, or other ground cover at the base of the more mature trees.

Although the blooms of our delicate pink tulips and bright yellow daffodils have disappeared from our 23 tree gardens, they will reappear next Spring and many Springs to come in Riverside Park. Three of our block's gardeners - Ira Gershenhorn, Dru Heidle, Robert Randall, and Teresa Elwert,—dug up the bulbs and replanted them in the park. Why? The bulbs don't flower again when left in the tree gardens because that environment is too stressful and too shady. Ira reported that the bulbs he replanted in the park from last year's crop bloomed nicely this spring. It's especially pleasing that the tulips and daffodils will flower again because they were planted in memory of the fire fighters, police officers, and rescue workers who were lost at the World Trade Center.

Hidden Cameras

The city has installed hidden cameras in some busy subway stations to help identify thieves who steal money or fare cards from MetroCard machines. NYPD officials say one common scam is to jam a machine so customers won't receive the card they just paid for.

"The slot where the card would come out has been somehow altered by the thief," NYPD Assistant Chief William Calhoun said. "The customer stands there hitting the machine because they can't get the card, and then they go look for a Transit Authority employee to give them assistance. As soon as they walk out, the thief runs over, pulls out whatever device they used to block it, and off they go with the card."

"MAMA'S BOYS" MAKE GOOD

by Estelle Kattelson

Juan Rojas Campos, the owner of MAMA MEXICO, that wonderfully vibrant addition to our stretch of Broadway, not only graced our newsletter with its first color ad, but supports the community in his innovative dining and many other ways. Mama taught him — and his seven brothers how to cook — and continues to provide him with the recipes Chefs Tirso Herrera and Bernabe Rojas Campos use in the restaurant. When Juan arrived here fifteen years ago from Tlaxcuapan Puebla, in southern Mexico, which boasted one telephone for its population of 1,500 people, you can well imagine the culture shock.

As a resident of the Upper West Side with his wife and five children, Juan is an active proponent for the beautification of the Broadway Mall. Last December, he contributed the Christmas trees from 96th to 102nd St.; next year, he plans to do the same from 105th to 112th Streets. As a member of the Broadway Mall Association, he urges fellow business owners to follow suit, to plant flowers and shrubs, and otherwise maintain the sites.

Juan's appreciation of beauty is also evident in the light-spirited decor of MAMA MEXICO: wall murals, orchids in bud vases on each table, attractive tile motif bordering the kitchen. He has created an absolutely charming environment for us, and welcomes us as if we were guests in his home.

He's also instituted a program with local public schools, which involves groups of children coming to the restaurant for lunch, during which he speaks to them about the artwork on the walls, the culture of Mexico, and the importance of family. He also invites firefighters and police officers to teach children survival methods.

We are indeed fortunate to have such a family- and community-oriented entrepreneur in our neighborhood.

Play It Again – With Feeling!

By Estelle Kattelton

Have you ever received bad news from a doctor whose manner and body language left you feeling frightened and isolated? The commonly accepted way of relating to patients when giving them bad news has been for physicians to place themselves at a safe distance behind their desks without making sustained eye contact or offering empathy. Why such inhumane behavior? The rationale for that is unclear. Thankfully, a growing number of teaching hospitals are now offering a training program for fourth year medical students, to teach them how to communicate more openly, to better listen to what patients themselves need to communicate and generally, to standardize care.

One such program established ten years ago, is the Morchand Center for Clinical Competence at Mt. Sinai School of Medicine. They hire actors (I'm among them) to play different patient roles, depending on the specific medical issues students are dealing with in class.

The Center has received wide publicity. In an episode of "Seinfeld," the Kramer character played the role of a patient with gonorrhea; if you're familiar with his lunatic antics, you may think it's fun playing "patient." Far from it. In fact after three years of playing a cancer patient and having to cry for several hours with 4 to 7 students each day, I found myself becoming depressed and actually taking on some of the symptoms. I asked to be relieved of that role, at least temporarily.

The two programs I've worked in are "Communicating Bad News," and "Advance Directives," in which the student is required to explain the purpose and need for a living will and a health care proxy to a healthy patient.

In each of the scenarios, we actors are given a "script" with a social history (age, marital and family status, work experience, etc.) and a detailed medical history and the reason for consulting the doctor. We then are free to act in whatever way may seem appropriate for us but we must play our roles authentically, to genuinely engage the students. On a given day there may be four or five of us in separate examining rooms; two of us may play one role, the others another role.

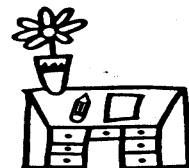
The 20-minute videotaped sessions are monitored in an adjoining viewing room by a doctor and a training supervisor. After each session (four to seven per day with 10-minute breaks) the "doctor" leaves. We fill out evaluation forms, noting how they related to us. Did they make eye contact? Was there appropriate physical touching? Did they shake our hands when entering the room? Did they face us directly? The critical test, though, was how they broke the terrible news of our metastasized cancer.

We actors are free to wing it in our responses. At times I've spontaneously changed how I react. Instead of accepting the implied death sentence, I've raised the issue of alternative healing. In my role, having previously undergone chemotherapy with its attendant horrors, I'll try anything to avoid it. The students are either open-minded and will explore other options at my request or categorically opposed to anything that isn't "in the books."

After completing the questionnaires, we place them in the respective students' folders and slip them under the doors. The students then compare our evaluations with their own self-evaluations. We remain in the rooms for the entire series of visits, so as not to meet any of the students in the ante-room while we're "out of character."

When the sessions are over we meet for "debriefing." The group discusses those parts of the videos the students want critiqued. We actors are then asked how we felt we were treated and where there could be improvement. Such group discussions are very illuminating since the participating students come from a wide range of national, cultural and racial backgrounds where to offer a comforting touch can put the doctor in conflict with the student's cultural taboos. Videos showed how the students seemed to be aloof when warmth was called for in these conferences.

I can now never forget that we are all human beings and need the warm interaction of a concerned person in all such difficult circumstances.



TAKE ACTION

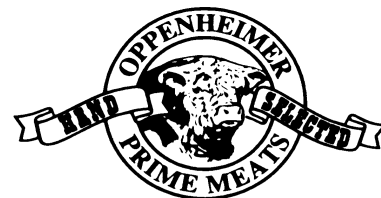
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Calendar Of Selected Events

- 5/25-26 Grand Illusion, Hiroshima Mon Amour and The Sorrow and the Pity**, Film Series at the Leonard Nimoy Thalia Theater in Symphony Space. The series continues on weekends through 7/20-21. Tickets are \$9. Call 212-864.1414, x402 for a recorded message, or visit www.symphonyspace.org for more information.
- 5/27 New York Philharmonic Memorial Day Concert**, Kurt Masur's farewell, with Bernstein's Serenade and Mahler's Symphony #1, "Titan". Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St., 8 pm. FREE.
- 5/30 New Madrigals and Fables** with music by Menotti, Levi, Banchieri, Vecchi and Lassus, performed by the New Amsterdam Singers. Merkin Hall, 67th St. West of Broadway, 8 pm. Tickets \$22, seniors and students \$15. To reserve tickets call Lauren Scott at 212.568.5948.
- 6/1 Sweet Potato Pie and Such**. Karen Nur El-Amin and Kala JoJo present an old African American tradition - a morning of storytelling and engaging tales. Part of the Just Kidding series, Symphony Space, Peter Jay Sharp Theater, 11 am. Family Program for ages 4 and up. Call 212.864.5400 for ticket reservations of \$10.
- 6/1-9/7 Free Walking Tours** every Saturday at 11 am. Sponsored by the Lincoln Square Business Improvement District. Tours begin at Columbus Circle Fountain and will offer "Sidewalk Surprises" including behind-the-scene trips near Lincoln Square. For more information call 212.581.3774.
- 6/2 The Orpheus Chamber Orchestra** plays Waxman, Mozart and Tansman at Riverside Church Nave, 122 St. and Riverside Drive. 3 pm. Call 212.896.1704 for ticket information.
- 6/7 New Amsterdam Symphony Orchestra 25th Anniversary** plays Liszt's Piano Concerto #1 and Berlioz' Symphonie Fantastique at Riverside Church, 8 pm. Eckhart Preu conducts, Ioannis Potamouisis is pianist. Tickets available at the door for \$12 (\$6 for students/seniors). Call 212.864-5400 for more information.
- 6/8 Microcosmos**, a detailed documentary about insects which transforms tiny creatures into grandiose characters full of romance, chivalry, humor and drama. Part of the Film Factory's Outrageous Nature series, 11 am. Symphony Space Leonard Nimoy Thalia Theater. Tickets \$9 or call 212.864.5400 for more information.

6/8 Dance Sampler, a four-hour showcase of 16 dance companies and their choreographers. Symphony Space Peter Jay Sharp Theatre, 7 pm. Tickets \$16. Call 212.864.5400 for more information.

6/9-ongoing Totally Kids Carousel, Riverbank State Park, Riverside at 140th St. Hours are 1 to 7 pm Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays. Tokens for rides are \$.50 each, or a Fun Pass of 12 tokens for \$5.00. The Park is open from 6 am to 11 pm daily. In addition to the carousel, there is a 50-meter pool, rollerskating in the summer, a 150-seat restaurant with a 100-seat outdoor terrace. You'll also find a 25-yard lap pool, a wading pool, four basketball courts, four hand/paddleball courts, a softball field, four tennis courts and a running track. Check it all summer and all year.

6/9 Elijah Men's Chorus of the Central Presbyterian Church of New York a group of 16 men performs at Riverside Church Christ Chapel at 3 pm. Free.

6/17 Summer Movies at Bryant Park, at sunset through 8/19. Avenue of the Americas at 42nd Street. Free The screen is 20 feet high and 48 feet wide.

7/9 Annual Summer Series of Organ Recitals begins with Gail Archer, Faculty of Manhattan School of Music and Barnard. Riverside Church Nave. 7 pm. Tickets \$15 and \$10 for Students & Seniors. Series continues on 7/16 with Timothy Smith, Riverside Church organist, 7/23 with Gregory Peterson of Boston, Christopher Johnson of New Haven, and 8/6 with Thomas Heywood from Australia. Call 212.870.6722 for more information.

10/5 104th Street Block Association Yard Sale.

WEST 104th STREET BLOCK ASSOCIATION

Treasurer's Report April 2002

by Sid Herzfeld

OPENING BALANCE: 04/01/2002	\$ 8,223.11
INCOME:	
Dues	\$ 1,140.00
Newsletter Ads	600.00
Challenge Grant	500.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$ 2,240.00
DISBURSEMENTS:	
Guard Service	\$ 2,400.56
Bank Fee	15.00
TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS	\$ 2,415.56
CLOSING BALANCE: 04/30/2002	\$ 8,047.55

Letter to the Editor

Please forgive the tardy yearly dues from our household. It continues to be a tight financial time here, but we so appreciate the work done on the block's behalf. The flowers and guard duty - and community spirit on this block are something we are very proud of and happy to support.

Dan Jenkins and Kathy Hiler



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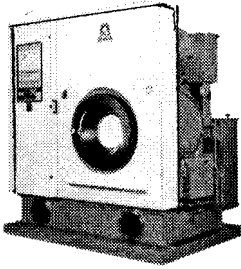
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Know Your Neighbors—on and off Broadway

Interview by Barbara Bryan and Hanna Rubin—Writing by Hanna Rubin

On warm spring evenings when the sunlight is still glowing on top floors of West End Avenue apartment buildings, you'll find Jane Connell leaning against the doorjamb at 905 WEA. She's not just enjoying the weather; she's waiting for the limousine that will take her down to Eugene O'Neill Theater on West 49th St., where she'll start making up for her part in the Broadway hit "The Full Monty." Soon, in the role of Jeanette, the rehearsal pianist, she'll be urging the guys in the chorus to take it all off and let it all hang out.

Jane, 76, and her husband Gordon Connell, 79, have been Broadway performers for decades. They met when both were undergraduates in the drama department at the University of California at Berkeley in the late 40's. After graduating, they become part of the Strawhatters, a group that staged revues, a then-popular format that stitched together songs and topical sketches. Good notices kept them in the Bay Area a while, often performing four shows a night. The Connells proved adept revuers. Gordon, a musician as well as a performer, had a knack for composing musical parodies, and Jane, an attractive blonde, sang comic numbers.

A fellow performer encouraged them to go east and try out for Julius Monk, a well-known New York cabaret impresario. Friends lent them \$300 and Monk agreed to put them in a revue at Ruben Bleu on E. 52nd St. More gigs followed, and they pulled through the tough stretches with stints as sales clerks. Finally, Jane had her Broadway debut in "New Faces of 1956," a revue-style pastiche that was mounted several years running to showcase new talent. She shared a dressing room with another newcomer, Maggie Smith. By then the couple had settled down on the West Side, eventu-

ally moving to 104th St. At first they didn't like what Jane calls "vertical living." Both Berkeley natives, they missed the spaciousness of a house. Still, they felt at home in the quiet, family atmosphere they found in the West 100's, and their daughters, Maggie and Missy, grew up at 905 WEA. The decades that followed brought them more featured roles. Gordon appeared on Broadway as the judge in "Hello Dolly!" while Jane originated the role of Agnes Gooch in the hit "Mame." They were grateful when either ended up in a long run. "If you've got a job in this business, you hang on to it," says Gordon, who toured in the national company of "Anything Goes" as millionaire Elisha Whitney. Usually when one was working, the other wasn't, so "we kept each in balance," he recalls.

The Connells haven't worked together often, but both had featured roles in the 1999 Carnegie Hall concert staging of Noel Coward's "Sail Away." A poster for it hangs in their apartment beside Hirshfield cartoons, sketches of costumes, and a sign admonishing "No One Is Permitted On Our Stage," a souvenir from a stand in Pittsburgh. With each comes a story, a quick glimpse of a half-told chapter of Broadway history, and then the grandfather clock ticks away and begins to chime, and it's time for Jane to get ready.

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Dru Heidle, 320 Riverside Drive, #1 212 678 0412, dheidle@rcn.com

Cat sitter Responsible, experienced. Comes twice a day and pets, feeds, and plays with your cat. References available. Charges \$5 a day. Lydia, age 12, resident of 905 West End Ave. 212 865 6588

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	Barbara Bryan (905 WEA / 864-5663)
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	Mimi Schade (895 WEA / 316-3245)
	Marsha Tantleff (315 RSD / 932-9592)

West 104th Street Block Association Board

E-mail: West104block@hotmail.com

Dues 2nd Quarter 4/02—6/02

Please allocate my contribution to:

☐ Security ☐ Beautification ☐ Social ☐ Newsletter ☐ Board Discretion

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Address Apt. No.

Make checks payable to West 104th Street Block Association Inc.

Mail to our treasurer: Sid Herzfeld, 895 WEA., Apt.5D New York, NY 10025

or drop off at

315 RSD: Steinhardt, Apt. 18B, 320 RSD: Elwert, Apt. 9D,

905 WEA: Bryan Apt. 141, 309 W 104th: Deegan, Apt. 5B