

# West 104<sup>th</sup> Street

**BLOCK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER**

**DECEMBER 3, 2008**

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Happy Holidays



## Farewell to Elms

They were there one day, gone the next. Every morning I would open the blinds and look out at the river over the canopy of trees that line Riverside Drive. One day last summer, awakened by a strange buzzing noise outside, I lifted the shade and instead of seeing leaves and water, I saw lines of cars inching along the Henry Hudson Parkway. Looking down, I watched in horror as the four majestic elms that shaded the 104 bus stop were ripped limb by limb from the landscape. I later learned that these elms, particularly the 40 or so that line the river between here and 120th Street, belonged to one of the largest remaining American elm groves in the United States. The trees on our corner were the latest victims of a possible new strain of Dutch elm disease, a century old fungal blight that destroyed most of the elms in this country. Our trees were exorcized as part of a program to protect the grove, purging the most infected elms, pruning the ones that could be saved, and inoculating the healthy specimens. Dutch elm disease, which began in the Netherlands, is a fungus that is spread by the elm bark beetle. It prevents water from reaching the limbs and leaves of the trees. The fungus starts on the outer twigs and makes its way downward to the ground. The disease can be spread through the roots to adjacent trees. If you detect the disease early you can spare the tree by trimming affected branches. Unfortunately, this preventive maintenance was halted by the budget cuts in the early 1990's, leaving our groves vulnerable.

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## Block Resident Awarded a MacArthur Palliative Care Specialist Dr. Diane Meier Receives "Genius" Grant



A pioneer in the field of palliative care, Dr. Diane Meier, a longtime resident of 315 Riverside Dr., has received a 2008 MacArthur Fellowship (the so-called \$500,000 "genius" award) for her work at Mount Sinai Medical Center. A geriatric specialist, Meier established a program at the hospital to work with patients and their families, and created pain management strategies. She also directs the Center to Advance Palliative Care, which is affiliated with Mount Sinai. For Dr. Meier, the grant signals more attention to her field. "It will bring wider recognition both professionally and publicly to palliative care, and its importance for patients and families living with serious and complex illness," she told the newsletter in an email. Her interest in developing ways to address patients' pain came from her clinical work. "I could not help but see how much misery patients and families in hospital settings were experiencing, and it became clear that much of it was preventable," she wrote. And after the demands of her day, she loves coming home to West 104<sup>th</sup> St. "Our block is like one big family," she wrote. "Everyone recognizes and greets everyone else, so it's like a village within the city. I love our neighborhood and wouldn't want to live anywhere else!"