West 104th Street

BLOCK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER **DECEMBER 10, 2010**

Editor: Nancy Lian

Happy Holidays

The 24th Precinct Community Council

On the third Wednesday of each month at 7 p.m., a community council meeting is held in the 24th precinct station house at 151 W. 100th St., between Amsterdam and Columbus. The council, an important link between the police of the precinct and the community, invites all interested parties to attend its meetings. 35 to 45 local people are usually present, many airing safety con-cerns and other problems. In addition to neighborhood residents, representatives of local newspapers and block associations, including ours, are among the interested parties.

Tom Burnett, community council president, opens each meeting with announcements and introduces speakers. Deputy Inspector Kathleen O'Reilly, precinct commanding officer, usually speaks about crime com-plaints and arrests and answers a broad range of questions both during her presentation and after it in the open session when many issues are also raised. She may call upon other officers present to respond to questions and concerns related to their specific areas of responsibility and repeatedly encourages residents to call her, other officers, and the precinct in general (212-678-1811) with concerns. Other speakers may include a representative from the Manhattan District Attorney's office. At the November meeting, the new borough commander, Chief William Morris, spoke about his background, responsibilities, and challenges. Supplementing the information provided by the police are handouts containing a statistical breakdown of crime complaints, arrests, and summons activity/reports, along with a historical perspective.

Topics raised by residents include traffic safety issues, criminal activity on certain blocks or in specific buildings, noise related to idling trucks. Some problems specific to an individual are discussed in detail with an officer after the meeting. Attendees announce specific activities for the community at large, including worthy events specifically sponsored by the community council. If one wants to know one's community much better, the council meetings are the place to go.

Don't Let Pain Take Over
Strategies for Coping with Chronic Pain

Our sister organization, Bloomingdale Aging in Place, presented its most recent panel on Pain Management on Nov,18 at the Marseilles. Carl Grey, MD and JD Elder, LMT presented. Dr. Grey is a fellow in Palliative Medicine at Mount Sinai Medical Center. Mr. Elder is Sinai's Massage Therapy Program Coordinator.
Most of Dr. Grey's presentation dealt with chronic pain, which is acute pain that persists for months, even though there is no apparent cause. Researchers cannot fully explain why acute pain sometimes turns chronic, but they have learned that if we can control the pain initially, there is less of a chance that it will develop into a long term condition.

So, how do we control pain? One of the worst things we can do is bed rest which can lead to weakened muscles and a slew of other bad effects. Sitting up and moving around is essential to health even if you have pain. Instead of suffering in silence Dr. Grey recommends that you take medication that relieves your pain so that you can function normally, whether it is an OTC (over the counter) or an opioid, which unfortunately falls into the category of narcotics. They have gotten a bad reputation, but they do more good than harm when Doctors' instructions are followed.
Available in stores without a prescription are NSAIDs (non steroidal anti inflammatory drugs) which include Ibuprofen (like Advil and Motrin,) acetaminophen (A.K.A. Tylenol) and aspirin. Ibuprofen reduces inflammation and pain, but should be limited to 2400 mg in 24 hours. We need to be careful with ibuprofen; if we take too much or for too long it can damage our stomach or our heart. If we don't drink enough water it can hurt out kidneys. Dr. Grey does not recommend this medicine for his patients over 75.

Acetaminophen (Tylenol) is effective for pain but we are not sure how or if it helps with inflammation. It is easier on your stomach but can be hard on the liver. In fact, taking too much Tylenol can lead to liver damage, particularly if you drink alcoholic beverages. Dr. Grey says that maybe one drink a day is OK, but he recommends complete abstinence to be sure.

(cont'd on p. 7)

Good Reads

Revolution is not a Dinner Party

What would it be like to live in a world of "yes men"? Your every move is scrutinized, the simple freedom of wearing and even eating what you want is taken away. Defiance and questioning results in public humiliation or even worse, physical punishment. That's the world depicted in Ying Chang Compestine's *Revolution is not a Dinner Party*. It's 1972 and all over China, The Cultural Revolution is in full swing. Drawing from her childhood experience, the author tells the powerful story of nine-year old Ling who lives a comfortable life with her parents, both dedicated doctors. But when Comrade Li, one of Mao's political officers moves into a room in their apartment, Ling fears for the safety of her family and neighbors. Over the course of four years, Ling manages to blossom despite the horrors she witnesses and experiences. This gripping story of surviving oppression told through the eyes of a child will not disappoint. Pair it with reading the classic, *Red Scarf Girl by Ji Li Jiang* for a complete picture of life during Mao's time. For kids in 6th to eighth grades.

SPRING FLOWERS

On a beautiful fall day a group of civic minded neighborhood folks gathered on the corner of 104th and RSD to prepare for spring. We planted tulips bulbs up and down the block and in the spring we will fill in the holes with pansies. In addition to our regular planters we had some new additions which helped to lower our medium age considerably and speed up the planting. They are Becca Silber (granddaughter of Phyllis Sperling) Max and Kayla Massick (son and daughter of Michelle Massick) and Kivlighan De Montebello (son of Raasaleela De Montebello). Their moms, Raasalee De Montebello and Michelle Massick had obviously planted many a tulip in their day and our very welcome additions to the planting brigade. Phyllis Sperling was unable to plant this year, but her granddaughter fiilled in nicely. We look forward to Phyllis joining us in the spring. And a big thank you to our regulars who can always be counted on to make 104th street shine. They are: Teresa Elwart, Rita Houlihan, Jane Cohen, Lynn Max, Barbara Byan, Alex Grannis and Joe Rappaport. A special thank you to Rita Houlihan who made the flyer that we put up in the 104th street buildings and thanks to Joyce Mann who put them up in the buildings without doormen. It really helped. Thanks to all. *by Bonnie Dry*

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WEST 104 STREET BLOCK ASSOCIATION
FINANCIAL REPORT NOVEMBER 2010

Opening Balance (1/01/10)…….		**$35,897.72**
Income		
Dues:	*$1,290.00*	
Total		**1,290.00**
Disbursements		
Guard service:	*$3,280.30*	
Guard supplement	*300.00*	
Printing & mailing:	*195.00*	
Planters	*54.38*	
Yard Sale	*384.77*	
Total		**$4,214.45**
Closing Balance (11/30/10)		**$32,973.27**

Lost and Found

Someone lost a bracelet at the Yard Sale Sept. 25. To identify it and claim it, please contact Phyllis Sperling at 212.595.8981

Block Association Members who have taken advantage of the 40% discount on parking at 101-102 St. Garage: Your Block Association payment for 2011 is due in full by January 31 in order to maintain your discount.

Contributors to this issue:
Barbara Boynton, Bonnie Dry, Trudie Grace, Alex Grannis, Nancy Lian, Joyce Mann, Phyllis Sperling, Gary Waskow, Sharon Waskow, Steve Zirinsky.

West 104th Street Block Association Board

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Bloomingdale Aging in Place Panel
STAYING INDEPENDENT:
Secrets to Helping Yourself and Others

BAiP presented the first of several panels for fall 2010 and spring 2011 on Oct. 21. The panelists were: Dr. Mark Weinberger, an instructor of Psychology at Weill Cornell Medical College; Deborah Drelich, of New York Elder Care Consultants; Constance Gemson, adjunct lecturer at LaGuardia Community College.

Ms. Drelich addressed the topic of when, how and whom to ask for help. She reminded us that being independent does not exclude seeking help. She cautioned us not to wait until a situation is dire and becomes a crisis. She urged us to think ahead when we notice that things are changing. Things inevitably change but while it may not be possible to completely regain control of one's life, there are stabilizing measures available. Some markers to look for: unpaid bills, soiled clothing & messy surroundings, empty refrigerators, i.e., shopping has become a huge chore. She reminded us that resources are available in our neighborhood and in the larger community and that no one has to go it alone. Make peace with the idea that you have reached a point in life where you do need help and get it.

Resources may range from family members, neighbors and building staff, to agencies such as One Stop Senior Services, churches, community centers and geriatric care managers. Some of these cost money, so part of the challenge is how to finance the needed help. There are agencies which can help us figure this out.

Mark I. Weinberger addressed the psychological and emotional barriers to seeking help, particularly for seeking mental health care. He defined 'depression' in its different forms and levels – low level depression (LLD) to major depressive disorders (MMD.) Depression, under-recognized and under-treated among older adults, is a treatable biological illness and not an expected part of aging.

Also, logistical factors like the availability/cost of services; transportation problems; lack of insurance; and other medical conditions that (in the mind of the patient) may take precedence. We are reminded that depression in itself can affect our perception of need for care. Untreated, depression can diminish our quality of life and complicate the course and outcome of other illnesses.

Constance Gemson talked about coping with memory loss. She listed some of the *false* myths about memory: that inevitably it declines with age; that memory loss is a matter of genes; and that memory can be improved with some simple, standard strategies.

Some memory changes are normal: misplacing things, occasionally forgetting appointments and names of places and acquaintances. This kind of memory loss can be dealt with by improving one's concentration and staying calm. Memory, Ms. Gemson tells us, is adversely affected by emotional stress and over medication. These problems are fixable. Worrisome changes, like forgetting names of close friends and relatives and what happened yesterday, are the kind of changes that should be certainly followed up on, notwithstanding the Buddha saying "Don't just do something stand there."

Female Spanish doctoral student currently teaching at the Universidad Politecnica de Madrid seeks non-smoking room or apartment share for 3 1/2 months (April 17 - July 31, 2011) while doing research in the Avery Library Archives, Columbia University. Able to pay up to $800/month. If you have such an accommodation available for the period indicated, kindly contact Lydia Dufour for further details (lydiad40@gmail.com).

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MEMORIES - On Moving to West End Avenue

When my husband and I moved to New York City in the early 70's we moved into an apartment near Columbia University. While it wasn't a railroad apartment with one room opening into the next room, it did have the other frequent layout---a long, dark hallway with rooms opening on the side and ending in two adjacent rooms at the back. I soon became acquainted with the usual conversation at all New York gatherings-----how could one find a bigger, lighter, rent controlled apartment? (In those days few apartments had become coops or condominiums.) While I did occasionally search for a better apartment. It was discouraging and most friends agreed it was impossible.

But since I walked my son to his nursery school at 100th Street every day, I would look at buildings along West End Avenue fantasizing about living in this or that building. My favorite was a handsome stone building with French windows, and I once asked the super if there were any apartments for rent. (There weren't.) One day at my son's nursery school. I was standing near his teacher, when I heard her say, "Our sublet has fallen through." When I inquired more she explained that she and her artist husband were moving to Westbeth, they would try it for 6 months and if they didn't like it they would return to their original apartment. My husband and I agreed to look at their apartment that night. To my surprise and great delight she lived in my long -admired building with French windows. The apartment opened into a spacious vestibule and was the classic prewar seven- room apartment. It was sunny and spacious. Of course all of our friends thought we were out of our minds to move for what might only be six months, We were taking a chance but due to the rental laws at the time, we knew that if the artist/teacher couple didn't return, we would be able to obtain the lease for a rent-controlled apartment. (While this eventually involved claiming it as a semi-professional apartment, which meant a larger increase in the monthly rent as well as a one-time separate secret payment to the landlord, we did obtain the lease.) When the building became a cooperative (one of the last to be done with an evict plan) the committee members compared notes about their payments to get in the building.

I was enamored with the building and its residents immediately. There were many Europeans who had left Europe before and after the war. They were warm and gracious. One European woman presided over a home for elderly people in two joined apartments on the top floor. One tall. distinguished resident often sat talking to his son in the lobby. I would have little conversations with him in the elevator or the lobby. Someone told me he had been the editor of a well-known newspaper in Berlin before the war. There were musicians, artists and writers among the residents. It was a stable group since very few people moved. Of course, like most apartments on the West Side, the building received only the most basic maintenance. But the elegance of the building's marble lobby and stained glass windows was still there beneath years of dust and neglect.

I love living in my apartment. No matter how crowded the city, or how difficult the day, I am contented the moment I enter my home.

By Alex Grannis

Block Bulletin Board

Steven Bleier, co-founder of the Festival of Song, and teacher at Juilliard, was highlighted in the November 29 issue of *New York* Magazine. (*see p. 7 Calendar*)

Dev Rogers can be heard rendering her Jewish Female Geriatric Rap Song on Youtube at "DevRogers1".

Sharon Waskow was covered in the Nov. 22 *New York Times Learning Network* section for her innovative use of the newspaper for teaching in her Scarsdale Middle School library.

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HALLOWEEN RECAP

With a week to go before Halloween, Gary enlisted my help in organizing a Halloween parade. At four thirty on Halloween, my son (Ethan) and I, along with Gary, hung ghosts, spider webs, some spiders and creepy masks on the trees and tree pits along out block.

We try so hard the rest of the year to make these look beautiful and here I am making them look creepy. Oh well.

For a last minute we had a pretty good turnout. We had three groups, with a total of 12 children, that went for a walk around the block in thirty mile an hour winds. The kids enjoyed it. At least they did not get blown away. We gave away silly bands at the end.

Next year the sequence will be:

1. Group decorating at 5:00-all the kids will help decorate the block. It would be great if building owners would like either to participate or to allow us to hang decorations on their stoop/entry. Please contact us to arrange this -- we won't push it.

2. Gather for the procession at 5:30 (to actually march at 5:40) and then wind up back at 315 Riverside Drive with gifts for all. Ideally it would be great if we had an oomph band (or New Orleans Jazz band) to lead the way.
....and with a few minutes to spare so that everyone can make it to the 102-103 Street event.

By Steve Zirinsky

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In the Spotlight:

Brother and Sister:
Super Volunteers

Anna and Julian Maheu of 309 West 104th St. are a special team of yard sale volunteers - a brother and sister who both believe that giving back to your community is an important and fun thing to do.

Anna, age 12, is a lifelong 104th Streeter, having lived here since she was born. A 7th grader at Hunter College High school, this is her first year there and "I really like it," she says with a big smile. Her favorite class is English, because she wants to be a writer. "I like books that take things we already know about and turn them into fiction. " Special favorites are mysteries such as "The Mysterious Benedict Society" and "The Gum Street Girls Club," where four young girls who don't really like each other very much need to work together in order to solve mysteries. Although writing occupies much of her free time – she is currently writing a science fiction book - Anna also plays the piano, enjoys photography and taking videos.

When I asked her if she had any particular philosophy that helped her get through the often complicated life of a young teenager she said: " 'Kill 'em with kindness.' It doesn't work on my brother so much, though. " She was quick to add that despite the occasional fight "My relationship with my brother is great. He's not afraid to be himself and I really admire him for that."

When I asked Anna what motivated her to volunteer at the Kids' Bake Table for the Yard Sale she replied: " Oh, I've been doing it for three years. The first year I made sugar cookies and the second year I made banana bread. It sold so well that I made it again this year." She and her friends Annie and Jane not only baked, but supervised the table for many hours and proudly collected the $156 the table made. "The key to the bake table is to make everything pretty and to move fast" she explained. "You can't just sit there and wait – you have to attract people." "It was lots of fun and it was for a good cause - to help the block I live on. I'll definitely do it again next year."

Julian Maheu, 15, is a freshman at the Birch Wathen Lenox school. "Getting used to it after middle school was a little hard" he said, but he really likes it now. His favorite subject is Conceptual Physics, and he is looking forward to learning the laws of physics next year and then taking chemistry in his junior year. "There are so many branches of science and I like to look at all the different viewpoints of things. "When asked if he wanted to become a scientist, he said "When I was young I wanted to become an inventor, but then I realized that everyone does that, really. Creative writers invent things, even mathematicians and historians invent theories. I want to be either in the medical field or a marine biologist because we know 80% of what life on earth is like, but only maybe 40% of what life is like under the sea."

As a probable outcome of his scientific curiosity, Julian is an admitted "foodie." He loves to cook and bake and watches the Food Network all the time. In addition to watching TV and experimenting on his own, he took a cooking class at ICE, the Institute of Culinary Education, and really loved it. When I asked him some of his successes there he quickly replied: "My butternut squash soup with rosemary cream and raisin bread croutons. The soup has some saltiness and some sweetness, but the rosemary takes it up to a whole other level and the raisin croutons add extra sweetness. If you like it more savory, you make cheddar cheese croutons, but both are delicious." He has also mastered the apple tart "tartin," made with apples and caramel and brown sugar. Additional hobbies include playing tennis, basketball and downhill skiing.

When asked about his philosophy of life he referenced both the movie "The Dead Poets Society" -"Carpe Diem," - and the Rihanna song " Live Your Life." He also admires a saying on a bag his mom carries that says: "Do one thing every day that scares you." I asked him about what he admires in a friend and he said "Someone who likes who they are and will show that to others." He also agreed that he and Anna have a very good relationship and was quick to compliment her on her passion for writing. "I'm not as good at expressing myself as she is – she's mastered it so she truly writes what's in her heart and I really admire that.

As far as the yard sale is concerned, Julian initially did it to earn some community service credits for his school, but as soon as he came out to help he said, "I got this rush of adrenaline. After setting up the tables I asked if I could help with the BBQing and they said yes, so I spent the next 4-5 hours cooking burgers. It was a good feeling to know I was helping to feed all those people who were waiting on line on that windy September day to have a good lunch. Before I knew it I was helping to take down the banner and fold up equipment and I'd put in 9 hours for my community service credit. "When I asked Julian what he'd say to other teenagers on the block who might be thinking of helping next year he said; "It's a really fun way to earn your community service credits. I met some old friends I hadn't seen in a year and made some new friends, too. Although it is hard work, it gives you a great sense of accomplishment. I will definitely do it again next year." *By Joyce Mann*

Don't Let Pain Take Over *(cont'd from p1)*

Limit your intake of acetaminophen to 4,000 mg. per day, spread out over 24 hours (3,000 mg if you are over 75.) Be sure to count the acetaminophen in cough medicines and other medications (such as Percocet.) Tylenol can also make your blood thinner, so stay away if you are on Warfarin. If you are taking Tylenol regularly, make sure your pharmacist and primary doctor know in case you are taking another medicine that can be hard on your liver.

As for aspirin, Dr. Grey does not recommend it as a pain medication for his older patients, except for 81mg per day as a preventative for heart attacks or strokes if indicated by your physician.

Most pain relief specialists lament that too many patients reject opiates (morphine) or opiate derivatives (oxycodone, Percocet, Vicoden) out of hand because they are afraid of becoming addicted. Dr. Grey explained that opiates are great pain relievers and it is very unlikely that someone who is taking them for pain will become addicted. The greatest downside of opiate medications is constipation and stool softeners etc. must be taken on a daily basis. Driving should be monitored carefully, particularly at night since it may be harder to see in the dark.

Dr. Grey does not dismiss other pain management techniques such as heat/ice, marijuana, massage, or other complimentary/alternative medicines such as meditation and yoga. Physical therapy may be the most important complimentary therapy we have. Most often if we are engaged in an interesting activity the pain may not be as severe, especially with appropriate pain medication.

In summation he suggests that you report pain as accurately as possible to your physician and make sure he takes your pain as seriously as your illness. Also, choose a pharmacist and stick with him/her. Your pharmacist will get to know you and be able to identify medication counter-indications.

JD Elder's presentation on Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) was equally informative. CAM covers care that is used in combination with or instead of standard medical care to promote health and relieve pain. These are sometimes biological agents (diet, herbs and vitamins,) energy based (using magnetic or bio-electric fields,) or manipulative therapies (which includes exercise, massage and chiropractic manipulation.) JD Elder also discussed mind-body medicine which is currently subject to a great deal of research. This includes the placebo effect as well as relaxation techniques. He told the story of older patients who were placed in an environment that mimicked the 1950's, a room with period furniture, black and while TV and the music that was popular at the time. After a while the room's occupants reported that they felt younger and proved it by behaving as if they had shed years off their ages.

JD's area of expertise is message therapy and he described some of the 80 different types of this modality. *Swedish massage*, which covers the whole body is designed to relax you and relieve your stress and is the most prevalent. It combines aspects of a number of the following techniques. *Sports message,* targeting limited areas of the body, stresses rehabilitation, is often vigorous and attempts to loosen and relieve sore muscles. *Medical massage* is a specific application designed to treat a condition such as a shoulder problem or Parkinson's disease. *Manual lymph drainage massage* reduces swelling and edema.

Yoga, which incorporates meditation, breathing and movement, has been shown to be helpful with pain reduction. It can be gentle or more rigorous, but involves the mind/body connection. Yoga often encompasses a holistic approach to life, including vegetarian diet and spirituality. *Meditation* too has proven to relieve pain by helping us overcome anxiety.. We don't always understand the connection between our thinking and how our body reacts. Sometimes our pain is exacerbated by anxiety or obsessive rumination; we obsess about our pain, we wait for it, we look for it

In conclusion, JD enumerated the benefits of CAM: reduce or eliminate chronic pain, reduce the need for medications, improve mood and affect and enhance our sense of wellbeing. *By Phyllis Sperling*

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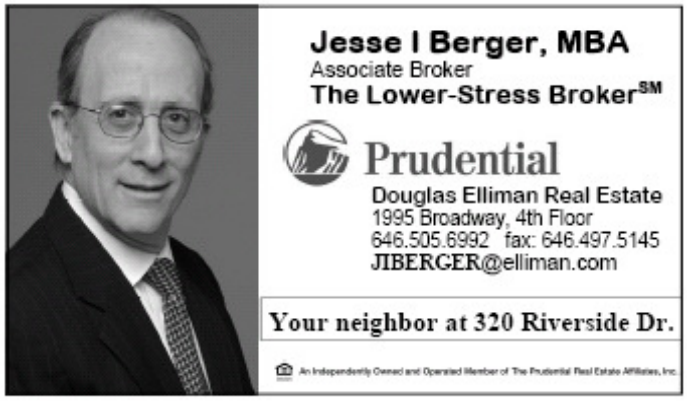

Selected Calendar of Events

12/10-12 The Christmas Revels: A Celebration of the Winter Solstice, with Bavarian theme. El Teatro at El Museo del Barrio, 1230 Fifth Ave. at 104th St. 12/10 8pm, 12/11 2 & 8 pm, 12/12 at 2 pm. For ticket information call 1.800.838.3006.

12/15-19 New Dances: Edition 2010. Juilliard Dance presents four world premieres choreographed for and performed by each class of Juilliard dancers. Peter Jay Sharp Theater, Lincoln Center. 8 pm. FREE tickets.

12/18 An Upper West Side Christmas. St. Michael's Church, Amsterdam at 99, 5 pm. Children's choral ensembles sing seasonal anthems; also a community carol sing. Suggested donation $20.

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12/18 Amahl and the Night Visitors, the Little Orchestra Society. Avery Fisher Hall, 11 am and 1 pm. For ages 6-12. Call 212.971.9500 for ticket information.

1/11 *Forgotten Ellis Island*, documentary film. Macaulay Honors College, 35 W 67 St., Screening Room. 2-3 pm. FREE.

1/12 *New York Festival of Song: Roadtrip* with Steven Blier, Piano with Juilliard singers performing songs by Kurt Weill, Emmerich Kalman, Cole Porter, Arthur Schwaqrtz, Irving Berlin, and others. Alice Tully Hall, 8 pm FREE tickets available 1/3.

1/19 Jazz Ensembles featuring original Juilliard student compositions. Lincoln Center Paul Hall, 8 pm. FREE.

1/29-30 Meet the Maestro. Children 3-5 become leaders of the band. Music by Beethovern, Dvorak, Bach and Ravel. 1/29-10:30 and 12 noon, 1/30 1 and 2:30 pm. Lolli-Pops at Kaye Playhouse at Hunter College. Call 212.971.9500 for ticket information.

2/7-9 Music by Charles Ives. String Quartet No. 1 - Voxare String Quartet, *Concord Sonata* - Stephen Gosling, piano, Selected Songs - Sarah Wolfson, soprano Miller Theatre Lunchtime Concerts. Columbia Philosophy Hall, 12:30 pm. FREE

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Suggestions for the block: _____

Make checks payable to West 104th Street Block Association Inc.
Mail to our treasurer:
Barbara Boynton, 905 WEA, #71, NY, NY 10025

or drop off at
895 WEA: Herzfeld, Apt 5D, 320 RSD: Waskow, Apt. 8G
315 RSD, Howitt: Apt. 8C, 309 W. 104: Mann, Apt 3