

The Park West Tenant

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The Newsletter of the Park West Village Tenants' Association

July 1986

HOW SECURE IS YOUR APARTMENT?

This article discusses recent examples of crimes in and around Park West Village and what PWV tenants, PWV Security and the NYC police can do to reduce the incidence of similar crimes. The editor thanks Park West Village Security, police officers from the 24th precinct, and tenants who have been recent victims of thefts in PWV for their help in providing information.

Crime in PWV in 1986

The 24th police precinct lists 18 burglaries,* 4 robberies,* 1 attempted burglary, 1 attempted robbery and 2 car thefts at Park West Village in the first six months of 1986 (compared to a total of 17 thefts in the same period in 1985.) Although all buildings have been affected, hardest hit were 784 Columbus with 9 thefts, and 400 CPW with 6 "successful" and 1 attempted. In the two buildings, 372 and 382, which acquired 24-hour lobby guards during 1986, only one robbery took place (though the two car thefts were from 372's lot.) Additional robberies have taken place on the public streets around the buildings.

*Burglary is a theft in which the thief has no contact with the person whose property he is stealing. Robbery connotes contact between the thief and the victim.

When and How PWV Thefts Happen

The vast majority of burglaries take place during working hours, between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Many appear to be "key jobs" -- that is, the thief enters without breaking the lock. In other instances the cylinders have been removed, and sometimes replaced.

Mostly money and jewelry have been stolen; only an occasional VCR and no objects d'art have been reported. Some apartments are ransacked, some not. Police note that crime in PWV seems to come in "spurts" -- there may be several crimes in a building or in the complex in one day or week.

Some examples of recent burglaries follow:

- A baby sitter in 400 opened the door for a man with a phony I.D. who said he had a delivery to make. The man and an associate ransacked the apartment.
- Between 10:00 a.m. when the working couple left their apartment in 392 and 1:30 p.m. when the daughter returned, someone came, unlocked both locks without removing or breaking them, smashed a desk and chair, ransacked the apartment, and took both jewelry and cash, including foreign currency.
- A 400 tenant, arriving home, noticed an unusual resistance in the top lock as she turned it, then felt (but could not see) that the bottom cylinder was loose, and as she opened the door, saw clothes every-

where. In case anyone was still there, she shut the door and called PWV Security from a neighbor's apartment. One guard came quickly and lest the thief was there still, called two others (who also came promptly) before entering. Closets and drawers were emptied, the kitchen ransacked, and mattresses ripped. Gone were several good pieces of jewelry including an heirloom, identification, credit cards, a checkbook, and a small amount of cash. The police, who were "extraordinarily helpful," said the tenant, remained three hours checking for fingerprints and helping her report the lost cards.

A neighbor had seen two men, one about 40 years, the other about 18, coming from the burgled apartment at about 1:30 p.m. One said "Good afternoon" and as they were carrying nothing, she had assumed they were legitimate visitors.

IF YOU SUSPECT A POSSIBLE BURGLARY

- or even if you see someone you don't know trying to enter or coming from an apartment on your floor -- please call PWV Security: 222-4300 or 222-4335.
- Report your name and apartment, and the apartment or floor where you have seen the unknown person(s), and describe them. Security will endeavor to be tactful in their inquiry of such persons and to embarrass no one. Call your neighbor if you can to let them know that you called Security. Several burglars might have been headed off or caught if neighbors had called earlier. One robber was caught by PWV Security in the parking lot as a result of a tenant's prompt call.

AND IF YOU HAVE BEEN BURGLIED

- * Call PWV Security (222-4300 or 222-4335)
- * Call NYC Police -- at 911 if there is a possibility the thief is still on the grounds, 678-1811 if not.
- * Call Sophie Elam, 866-8489. PWVTA has prepared a questionnaire which will help ascertain if there is a pattern to these thefts and what more can be done to prevent them.
- * Ascertain and list descriptions of what has been stolen -- but move things as little as possible until the police come.

(cont. on page 2)

- * Provide descriptions of these items and serial numbers of stolen equipment to the police.

REDUCING THE CHANCES OF THEFT

Actions tenants may consider to reduce the chances of theft include:

- Know Your Neighbors - Tenants are on the front line of any security watch. PWV Security, the police and PWVTA all suggest a meeting of residents on each floor, to know each other and agree formally or informally on watching for and reporting any possible intruders. 784 is attempting tenant floor patrols.
- Check Out Repair and Delivery Men - Especially if you have not requested a repair or delivery, check identification downstairs, not at your door, or request Security to check before you open your door.
- Operation Identification - The 24th precinct will lend tenants an engraving tool with which to engrave one's social security number on equipment, jewelry and other valuables, making them harder to sell and possibly easier to get back. The Operation Identification sign for one's door given by the police may be a deterrent to thieves.
- Record serial numbers of valuable equipment and take pictures and keep descriptions of jewelry and other valuables. The police warehouse in Queens contains millions of dollars worth of property no one has identified. If the police are given serial numbers and descriptions, there is a better chance of your getting something back.
- A Second Lock with a Smooth Guard Plate is harder to remove than a lock with no plate or a plate with four bolts. Even professional thieves don't want to loiter over locks. There are no burglar-proof locks: and the best pick-resistant ones may cost as much as \$200-\$300. PWV Management will install a plate over their lock for \$20. Check local locksmiths for competitive pricing.
- Alarms. Unfortunately, many alarms go off if a pet or an unwary guest walks in the wrong place or you are slow to put down the bundles before the alarm time limit ends. PWV Security often cannot readily identify from which apartment an alarm is sounding. The NYC police report that 98% of alarms they receive are false. Nonetheless, if an alarm goes off, a burglar will probably take off speedily. PWVTA is looking into the cost and effectiveness of various alarms. PWV Security has been invited to do likewise.
- Remove key to terrace door. Several years ago a multiple robbery of several floors was staged from the balconies. The thief let himself down in a line from floor to floor, and the only apartment he skipped was the one where tenants had locked the balcony door and removed the key.
- Guards in the Lobby? The "tenant watches" formerly mounted in the lobbies of several PWV buildings were effective crime deterrents, according to PWV Security and police. Thefts in 372 and 382 have been reduced to almost 0 since lobby guards have been posted. PWV Management might well consider

posting guards in the rest of the buildings at least during the "high crime" times: 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

HOW PWV SECURITY WORKS

Officers patrol Park West Village grounds and buildings in three 8-hour shifts. Four dogs accompany officers on the night shifts. At least several times in a 24-hour period, each building receives a "vertical," that is, an officer inspects the roof and then walks down one of the stairwells, looking on each floor and in each incinerator room.

Security telephones are posted on the outside of 372, 400 and 792. Security intercom phones are posted on each building. Each officer carries a stick, a walky-talky, and some carry guns for self-defense.

PWV Security's job is to protect life and property and to prevent crime. Pursuit of criminals on PWV grounds is part of the job. Anyone arrested is turned over to the NYC police. To pursue off PWV grounds -- including the street, sidewalks, or park -- is optional and depends on circumstances. One PWV officer recently pursued a thief to 110th Street and brought him back; another apprehended a thief and the bike he had stolen by chasing him into Central Park.

Lt. Leonardo Vinals, a 20-year veteran of the PWV Security force, heads the present PWV Security Force. The Security office is in the basement of 382 CPW; the four dogs are housed in 400 CPW's basement.

The 24th Police Precinct

Park West Village is in New York City's 24th police precinct at 151 W. 100th Street, which covers the West Side from 86th - 110th Street. (Central Park is another precinct).

The Park West Village blocks are one of nine areas in the precinct which are now patrolled in the new CPOP program by a foot patrolman, Anthony Vinson, whose job is to know the neighborhood, the people, to watch the street, and be available to help the community.

Some helpful contacts:

- Inspector Biehler, Commanding Officer, 678-1811.
- Crime Prevention Officer Lang, 678-1803
- Community Affairs Officers DeSuzia and Andricosky, 678-1803
- Foot Patrolman Anthony Vinson, 663-3198 or 4028.

On the 3rd Wednesday of every month, at 8 p.m., a Community Affairs meeting is held by and at the Police Department to which all neighborhood residents are welcome.

GOING ON VACATION?

- Best to let PWV Management and/or a trusted neighbor know how to reach you in case of fire, water or other mishap.
- If you will have friends staying in your apartment, write to PWV Management with their names and give a copy to your visitor. If Security inquires -- as they may do for any stranger entering the apartment -- or if your guests should lock themselves out -- both guests and management should be protected by your letter.

"QUALITY OF LIFE" COMMITTEE FORMED

Actions underway on the current main agenda items of PWVTA's "Quality of Life" Committee are reported below.

On Improved Security and Rat Control: See articles p. 1, 2 and 3.

On Upgraded Elevator Service: An Elevator Incident Report form was recently distributed to each tenant. It is common knowledge in PWV that the 20-25 year old elevators provide faltering service and despite repeated fixing, continue to break down. The Incident Report will enable the Committee to document the frequency and types of problems. These records are needed to support tenants' claims for better elevator service. Please report incidents of poor service to: (1) Management; (2) NYC Elevator Complaint Office (669-2610); (3) Your Bldg. rep.

On Elimination of Dog Litter: Signs will be posted outside for a start. More to follow.

On Power Surge: Damage to computers, VCR's, etc. from repeated power surges has affected 788 residents. On tenants' initiative, mgt. has checked, the Bldgs. Dept. has inspected, and a list of damages has been filed with DHCR.

On Ventilation: The law requires that ventilation be maintained in kitchens -- 24 hours a day, and in bathrooms up to midnight. TO TEST: put a kleenex against the ventilator. If it sticks, ventilator is on; if it falls, ventilator is off.

PLEASE HELP MONITOR THESE ISSUES and contact committee members to report problems, make suggestions or join and help.

Sophie Elam, Chair	788 - 4-0 - 866-8489
Kathy Studva	792 - 17-R - 662-5699
Sarah Jarvis	784 - 15-N - 663-5173
Palmer Tome	372 - 15-R - 865-8538
Audrey Young	392 - 1-M - 662-6155
Erma Buckley	400 - 2-S - 866-9724
Margaret Montgomery	400 - 9-K - 866-6938

SPEAKING PERSONALLY

Since the fall of 1984 PWVTA has carried on a fight against harassment of tenants by our landlord who has been driven by a greedy appetite for megabucks through conversion. Hundreds of tenants have been protected by our intervention with the Attorney General's office and in the Court, and all of us have been protected indirectly. We have spent thousands of hours and dollars in this struggle and in fact are running a deficit (in dollars, not hours). Even if we win a complete or partial victory in Court, we know the struggle will not be over. The landlord will come back with legal appeals or new kinds of harassment or both. We will need your support to maintain a strong tenants' association. Support can take three forms: activity; membership; and contributions to the Legal Fund.

Speaking personally, I am put off by the passivity of many of our tenants and by their lack of understanding. Every tenant could pay membership dues for years and contribute liberally to the Legal Fund with only a fraction of the dollars saved in rent by our long, expensive, and successful fight to defeat the 6.63% hardship rent increase. As Casey used to say, "Look it up, it's in the record."

Join the PWVTA! Contribute to the Legal Fund.

Carl Harm,
President, PWVTA

ITEMS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The New Rent Increases passed by the Rent Guidelines Board for the period Oct. 1, 1986 to September 30, 1987 are 6% for a 1 year lease and 9% for a 2 year lease. The present "vacancy" allowance of 7 1/2% remains in effect. In addition, apartments renting for less than \$350 per month may be charged an extra \$15 a month when a new lease is signed.

Local Farmers' Market is open on Fridays at 102nd Street and Amsterdam Avenue for fresh fruits, vegetables, and cheese, wine, meat, plants, honey, etc.

Lasker Pool is Open, free, at the Northend of Central Park from 11:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. daily until Labor Day. Least crowded times are 11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. and after 4:00 p.m. Wear your bathing suit or take a lock if you wish to use a locker. Telephone 722-9781 for further info.

PWVTA Newsletter Wins An Award of \$100 from Citizens Committee for New York City for "an outstanding Block and Association Newsletter". The award was made at a ceremony May 10 attended by city officials and community organizations.

PWV Tenants Write and Visit Albany Over 1,000 letters were sent by PWV tenants to Gov. Cuomo, Housing Commissioner Eimecke and key state legislators, and PWVTA was represented by a dozen members (and several more contributors) at the May 13 tenant demonstration and discussion in Albany, pressing for better housing legislation and a strengthened rent stabilization code.

Questionnaires to a Sampling of West Side Residents, Merchants and Arts Organizations have been issued by Community Board #7 as part of its West Side Futures: Balancing Preservation and Growth Study. About 100 PWV tenants are expected to be in the sample.

Intensified Subway Noise is plaguing many PWV households these days. In response to the PW Tenant's inquiry, MTA reported that waterlogged tracks and pads are being replaced between 97th-100th Streets and that the work should be completed by end-July.

WHEN YOU SEE A RAT.....CALL 285-9503

Garbage accumulation and construction are causing rats to abound in our neighborhood. With the rat comes disease. Therefore when you see a rat, call Rat Control at 285-9503. This agency is one of the New York City Department of Environmental Health Services and responds to your report by investigation. Also call Sophie Elam at 866-8489 to help PWVTA monitor the situation.

The Park West Tenant is produced by volunteers. Thanks to the writers and editors for this issue who include: S. Elam, C. Harm, V. Lawrence, D. Lichtman, M. Pasley, M. Rabinowitz, K. Studva.

Thanks for make-up: D. Learned, F. Vitale; and for special services: D. Cohen, I. Yao.

Suggestions and help welcome. Please call Win Armstrong, Chair, Publications Committee, 400 CPW, (5P), 865-3078.

Almost 1,000 tenants have now renewed their membership in the Tenants Association. If you are not yet among us, here is a reminder of some reasons to join and maintain the strength of our association.

- FINANCIAL:** Money saved on attempted rent overcharges, raising of base rentals, charges for maintenance, fuel passalongs, etc. The defeat of the 6.6% hardship rent increase in 1979 has saved money for all of us (much more than our PWVTA dues)!
- HISTORICAL:** Role of PWVTA in introducing and winning the Warranty of Habitability case, and the acknowledged pioneer status of PWVTA city-wide and in Albany in re-enforcing the concept of the right to affordable housing.
- MORAL:** PWVTA's stubborn fight against warehousing of vacant apartments as well as against attempts by Management to threaten tenants' "primary residency" by investigating tax returns, auto registrations, voting records and bank accounts.
- PSYCHOSOMATIC:** Our prompt reaction to the repeated trauma imposed by attacks against pet ownership, guests and visitors, fear of taking vacations and trips, etc.
- PATRIOTIC:** PWVTA'S constant appeal to the best in us, and the understanding that the Statue represents our chance to use our freedom to express concern for our city and country, for the "huddled" homeless and for all who are put in peril as our city is being parcelled and sold out under our noses.

Put your money where your values and security lie. Join the PWVTA!

400 CPW TENANTS TAKE ROOF INITIATIVE

In March, 1985 tenant representatives from 400 CPW met with Management and among other issues, discussed recurring problems that tenants on the top floor of 400 CPW have had over many years (some for as long as 13 years). Subsequently, all the tenants on the top floor were contacted by the floor captains to determine the extent of the problems. All reported leaks and seepage from walls and ceiling which resulted in continually disintegrating plaster, and in some cases, ruined clothes in the closets and damaged furniture (one tenant had to put out buckets to contain the falling water). Other problems included air and rain leaks through warped

windows, and winter temperatures ranging from 56 to 64 degrees. These on-going, long-standing problems had not been solved by management's frequent replastering and repainting, since damage often reoccurred only weeks or months later.

Between May and December 1985, 16 of the 21 tenants on the top floor wrote individual letters to Management, specifying the problems. (No one received a response.) In March 1986, 18 of the tenants jointly filed a Statement of Complaint of a Decrease in Building-Wide Services with the N.Y.S. Division of Housing and Community Renewal, with a copy of Mgt. Copies of the letters and photographs of some of the conditions in the apartments were attached. Since then, tenants have received phone calls from Management informing them that a new roof will be installed this summer. It is hoped but remains to be seen whether this will resolve all of the problems.

CURRENT STATUS OF PWVTA'S COURTCASE
-- and PWV Conversion

The papers from all the parties -- PWVTA, Park West Management, and the Attorney-General --are before Judge Kenneth L. Shorter. PWVTA's case claims material errors and omissions in the Black Book, warehousing of vacancies, and tenant harassment. The Attorney General is supporting PWVTA on harassment, but not on the other two points.

PWVTA is asking for revocation of the conversion plan, i.e. the Black Book, because of all three points, or because of any one, e.g. harassment. The Attorney General asks only for injunctive relief on harassment. The sponsor pleads for dismissal of all charges.

Conversion of 372 and 382 has been at least delayed by the Court proceedings. Meanwhile, Helmsley Spear has submitted changes in the conversion plans in response to PWVTA's criticisms. Harassment of tenants especially over primary residency continues.

Any tenant who has signed a subscription agreement in response to the landlord's announcement of an April 7 closing date for inside purchasers may rescind that agreement. The April 7 closing date was in violation of a Court order which maintains the exclusive purchasing period for insiders until ten days after the Court decision. This violation was brought to the attention of the Court by PWVTA.

What's next? The Judge could rule on the papers alone, especially since Article 78 Cases are supposed to be expedited. Or he could call for a hearing. It is unlikely that any decision will be reached before late July.

PARK WEST VILLAGE TENANTS' ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 20339, Cathedral Finance Station New York, N.Y. 10025 (212) 662-2610

Name _____

Building and Apt. No. _____ Telephone _____

\$25 check for 1986 membership dues enclosed. My contribution to Legal Fund enclosed

Make check payable to PWVTA. Please clip this coupon and give it with your payment to your Building Representative or mail it to the above address. Please do not mail cash. Your membership card will be sent to you. (If you cannot pay the full amount, please pay what you can.)