

WAKEFIELD AREA NEWS

Compiled by the Wakefield Taxpayers & Civic League

By Mary V. Lauro

A dumb case

It happened on a Monday in mid-July during a heat wave. She was an advanced senior, a resident of Wakefield for 50 years. She stood in the hall of her two family house and yelled at the two officers. "What are you doing in my house?" At this point her tenant walked in gleefully smiling, opened his door and sat on the steps to watch what was happening.

"You, have no hot water." One of the officers said.

"So what?" she said.

"When's it gonna be fixed?"

She was furious. There were never any cops around when they were needed. Cars could block driveways for days without an officer responding. Loud music could blare all night long and no amount of calling could produce an officer. Now here were two cops wanting to know when her boiler would be repaired!

"Look," she said, her voice rising in frustration, "I never heard of officers going to a house because there was no hot water. I've had no heat and hot water in the middle of winter and no officers came to

my house."

"You're acting guilty," the officer said and repeated, "when's it gonna be fixed?"

"As soon as my fuel people can get here. It's summer, people are on vacation. I still don't get it. What business is it of yours?" "Your tenant hasn't got hot water."

"Of course, he hasn't. I don't have any either."

They seemed surprised. "You don't?"

"Come see," she said. The male officer followed her into her kitchen. She turned on the hot water. He put his hand underneath it.

"That feels a little warm," he said. Obviously, he had no idea of how boilers work or how houses are structured.

On the steps, holding back laughter was her tenant. "So, he called you and you came. I can't believe this. He takes in a boarder without my knowledge and consent but you come because my boiler is broken. What kind of sense does that make?"

But one of the officers was busily writing out a citation which he handed to her as her tenant laughed.

She sat down to compose herself before reading the summons. To her utter

chagrin, it said, "Unlawful eviction, no hot water." This was impossible. The officers had never told her what the complaint, was. She had said several times, "Why are you here?" They never said "unlawful eviction." If they had, she could have told them that was not at all the case and that the hot water had been off only two days during a hot spell. How could anyone in their right mind get rid of a tenant by turning off the hot water during a heat wave?

She called the commander of the 47th Precinct and related her story. It is not known whether the commander excoriated the two

officers who obviously fell short of their duty.

But, the octogenarian said, what was even more troubling was the court system. She went to Bronx criminal (note that! Criminal!) Court on the appointed date only to be told she had to go to Manhattan Criminal Court. In Manhattan she was confronted by a DA who offered her a plea deal. She did not bother to understand the deal. She told him she could not plead guilty to something she had not done. She has another date in Manhattan. One hopes the judge is not so dumb.