



**Protests outside the houses on West End Avenue yesterday** (RJMICKELSON/AMNY)

## UWS protesters: Doomed houses pose risk to block

**BY LANA BORTOLOTT**  
Special to amNewYork

About 60 Upper West Side residents staged a peaceful protest yesterday outside a pair of West End Avenue townhouses slated for demolition, charging that the site poses health, safety and quality-of-life risks.

The residents gathered outside 732-34 West End Ave., both townhouses owned by Alan Sackman, which will go down despite a long campaign to save them.

"The stress from looking at my wall is killing me," said Dee Alpert, a 39-year resident of 736 West End Ave. and chairwoman of the tenants' association, whose apartment sits along a common wall with one of the townhouses. "There are no meaningful steps that we know of to protect us."

The site is flanked by the rent-controlled apartment building at 736, and, at 720, the Williams Residence, senior housing operated by the Salvation Army.

Demolition scaffolding was erected last week, raising ire and alarm as residents reported claims of falling debris, and recorded what they call unsafe practices with their digital cameras.

The tenants of 736 — many of whom are elderly — have a Web site with a "collapse cam" ready to roll at the first sight of construction violations.

Calls to Sackman Enterprises were unreturned. It's unclear what he intends to build on the site.

# Jailed journalists could be pawns

**BY MARLENE NAANES AND SHAYNDI RAICE**  
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The two American journalists who were sentenced to 12 years of hard labor in North Korea yesterday are likely to be used as pawns in the communist country's high-stakes game with the rest of the world, experts said.

"I think it's shrewd strategic use of [North Korea's] very few points of lever-

age with the West," said Steve Clemons, director of foreign policy at the New America Foundation.

Laura Ling, 32, the sister of TV journalist Lisa Ling, and Euna Lee, 36, were arrested March 17 while working on a story for Al Gore's Current TV about trafficking of North Korean women across the Chinese border.

North Korea can try to use the women to lure the U.S. to discuss the

recent nuclear and missile tests and the need for aid, said experts and Korean-American New Yorkers said.

"Obama gave them a signal no more helping North Korea... Kim [Jong Il] is afraid about that," said James Rhee, 58, a Bronx resident originally from South Korea. "They



Ling



Lee

need help from America."

The White House yesterday said the administration is "engaged through all possible channels to secure their release."

The country has challenged new presidents before, said Howard French, a Columbia Journalism School professor who has traveled to North Korea twice.

"North Korean international relations follows a predictable wave pattern with presidential politics," French said. "Early in a new president's term, North Korea acts very tough and provocatively so to raise the stakes in the minds of its foreign adversaries."

The government is also flexing its muscle internally to ensure an easy succession for Kim Jong Il's youngest son, who seems poised to take power.



**High Line goes live** A park employee plants a bush on the High Line, an abandoned elevated rail line that is reopening to the public as a park today. The High Line stretches 1½ miles up the West Side of the Manhattan. (AP)

## Colbert cuts it up with troops in Baghdad

**BY RYAN CHATELAIN**  
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The U.S. officially has won the war in Iraq.

At least that's what late-night funnyman Stephen Colbert declared from Baghdad, where he is hosting his Comedy Central show this week.

Filming his show Sunday before hundreds of troops at Camp Victory, the host of "The Colbert Report" drew a loud applause when he let Gen. Ray Odierno, acting

on a videotaped order from President Barack Obama, shave his head.

"It must be nice here in Iraq because I understand some of you keep coming back again and again," Colbert joked with soldiers. "You've earned so many frequent flyer miles, you've earned a free ticket to Afghanistan."

Colbert, who plays a conservative pundit on his show, admitted there was a serious reason behind his trip: He was concerned

about the fading media attention given to the war.

In New York, former Army Sgt. Don Gomez, who served two tours in Iraq, said entertainers boost the troops' morale. He fondly recalls when comedian Tom Green visited.

"It felt like at least you know somebody cared that you were there," said Gomez, 27, of Queens. "And even though they're not doing military stuff, they are putting their lives in danger." (WITH AP)



**Gen. Ray Odierno shaves Stephen Colbert's head.** (AP)

## 'Rockefeller' has issues, defense says

The man who calls himself Clark Rockefeller descended into "pure madness" when he kidnapped his 7-year-old daughter



Rockefeller

during a supervised visit, defense lawyers told the jury during the trial's closing arguments yesterday.

But a prosecutor called his insanity claim "preposterous" and said he was a master manipulator who planned the kidnapping for months and knew what he was doing was wrong.

The Boston jury started deliberating yesterday but went home after about 3½ hours without reaching a verdict on charges of kidnapping, assault and providing a false name to police.

Rockefeller, whose real name is Christian Karl Gerhartsreiter, is accused of snatching his daughter, Leigh, during a supervised visit in Boston last July after losing custody of the girl to his ex-wife. Father and daughter were found in Baltimore six days later. The girl was unharmed.

"Taking a look at Mr. Rockefeller, you know that something is wrong with him," said defense attorney Jeffrey Denner. "This is not a man playing with a whole deck." (AP)