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No-Fee Rentals: A Game Of Find the Landlord

By **ROBERTA B. GRATZ**
(Second in a series)

RIVERSIDE DRIVE 140 (86 ST.)
THE NORMANDY FULLY SVCD BLDG
4 1/2 BKS. 2 BTHS 6400
4 rms. 2 BTHS 6450
W. P. R. Facing River. No Fee
PREP. ELEC. See Supt or call
212-724-4544 weekdays
RIVER 86 ST. 2 1/2 BKS. 2 BTHS 6400

This is the ad that led an apartment hunter to inquire at that imposing building on Riverside Dr. known as the Normandy.

The Normandy is a stylish example of an architecture that might be called 1939 World's Fair *moderne*. Canopied, terraced and towered, it stretches along the drive from 86th to 87th Sts.

It is one of several buildings where attempts were made to rent an apartment directly without paying someone—a broker, a managing agent or the landlord—a commission.

The attempts at the Normandy underline the increasing difficulty of renting without paying such a fee.

Right This Way

Orsid Realty Co., 250 W. 57th St., is the managing agent for the Normandy. It is Orsid's telephone number that is listed in the ad above. However, conveniently located in the lobby of the Normandy is Subud Realty Corp., a licensed broker handling apartments over much of the West Side.

The experience of several apartment hunters, including this reporter, has been that when inquiries were made of the doorman, the inquirer was automatically guided to the Subud office.

One new tenant at the Normandy did a considerable amount of pavement pound-



Post Photo by Richard Gummere

To rent an apartment at the Normandy, on Riverside Dr. at 86th St., you may have to pay a commission.

ing before he leased his apartment. He went to the Normandy specifically seeking an apartment he could rent without paying a fee.

He asked the doorman if there were any vacancies and was immediately referred to the Subud office. An agent there showed him a riverview apartment and informed him there would be a 12 per cent brokerage fee. He negotiated the fee down to 10 per cent,

leased the apartment and later learned that if he had insisted on dealing with the managing agent, Orsid Realty, he might have been able to rent without a fee.

Maks Etingin, president of Orsid, says "there is no connection between Subud and Orsid" and that Subud "just happens to have an office at the Normandy." Informed of the experiences of several

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people who had tried to rent there directly without paying a fee. He indicated that he saw "no valid criticism" on the basis of these experiences.

"I don't know who refers these people to Subud," he said, "and I can't be responsible for that. Maybe once in a while Subud gives the doorman \$5, but I can't be responsible and I don't know if he actually does or not. I just cannot control that many doormen."

Another apartment hunter had a similar experience at the Normandy. She walked in off the street, inquired of the doorman if there were vacancies and was referred immediately to Subud. A Subud employe indicated there were no vacancies in the Newmanly but that Subud had listings for many other West Side buildings. When it became clear that Subud was not representing just the Normandy, she left, returned to the doorman and reiterated her interest in dealing directly with the superintendent or managing agent.

It was only after intensive questioning and a perusal of lobby walls for a managing agent sign that she discovered that Orsld was the actual agent. She called Orsld and spoke to Elting, who assured her that "if you come to us first to rent an apartment in the Normandy there is no rental fee involved."

Samuel Budish, who holds the brokerage license for Subud, was asked to comment on these circumstances. "I don't know why people are referred to us that way," he said, "except that the doorman knows we do renting in the building."

Asked if his office has any private arrangement with the doorman, he said: "We don't tell the doorman to say anything because we have learned from past experience that people looking for the owner don't want to come to an agent and we don't want people coming in here under those circumstances."

"Publicity Might Hurt"
Considering the denials of both Samuel Budish of Subud and Maks Elting of Orsld about any special arrangements between the two, the experience of yet another apartment hunter is all the more confusing.

This man went to the Normandy with the New York Times ad reproduced at the beginning of this article. Because of the language of the ad—"see supé or call"—he went directly to the building.

"When I went inside," the man reports, "I asked the doorman where the super was and told him I was answering the Times ad. He

said the super wasn't in and I should go down the hall to the broker's office, Apt. 1F. "The ad said see the super," I said. "See the broker," he said."

He did and, at first, was told the apartment advertised was not available but that there were listings for other good apartments—on West End Av. After reiterating his interest in the Normandy and his riverview, he was shown two apartments—four and a half rooms on the 17th floor, riverview, at \$480, and another four and a half on the 12th floor, riverview, \$480.

During the apartment tour, the Subud representative was

asked if there were payments involved beyond the one-month security and one-month rent and the answer was no. "Then as I was leaving the office," this apartment hunter says, "I nudged him again and he acknowledged for the first time that I had to pay a 12 per cent broker's fee."

He left the office, reexamined the ad, saw again that it specified there was no fee. He called the number listed—Orsld's and spoke to someone about the ad without indicating he had already been to the building.

"Fine," the Orsld representative said, "somebody

will show it to you," this man reports. "I asked him if I should ask for the super when I got to the building. 'Just ask the doorman,' he said. 'He'll tell you.'"

"Then I asked him about money that I'd have to put down," this man continues. "He said just the security and the month in advance. 'That's it,' he said. It sounded pretty final."

He then telephoned Subud again. "I told the girl I just looked at the ad again and saw the 'no fee' line and asked why I was being dunned for a fee. 'Is it necessary?' I asked. 'It really is,' said she."

After several more calls to Orsld and Subud, a Subud representative finally told him: "Apparently there was some mistake. Since I'd called Orsld, I didn't have to pay the fee. But, of course, she said, if I walked in and went to her office I would have to."

"I was and still am totally confused," he adds. "I told her the ad said see the super and when I asked the doorman for the super he referred me to her office. 'Well, that was probably a mistake by the doorman,' she said. 'He doesn't understand.'"

"I left it there," he says, "but I don't understand anything. If I call the number in the ad, theoretically I don't pay a fee. If I ask for the super as the ad says I

do pay a fee because they'll send me to the broker and since I went through the broker and not the management I should, in all fairness, pay the broker's fee. Something is obviously amiss."

Neither Maks Elting of Orsld nor Samuel Budish of Subud agrees. Neither professes to understand how experiences like this can recur, and both repeat that they have no special arrangement with each other and no one has any arrangement with the doorman.

To Be Continued.

Killed Before His Time

JOHANNESBURG (AP)—An official inquest determined that Obed Kibwe, 192 years old, was struck by a car and killed as he crossed