

THIS PLACE IS A ZOO

PET LOVER FIGHTS TO STAY ON LEASH, UH, LEASE

By ALEX GINSBERG
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A West End Avenue landlord is trying to boot a 71-year-old animal lover from her rent-controlled apartment, calling her abode an uninhabitable "zoo" and "aviary."

According to court papers filed by the owner in this wild West Side feud, longtime tenant Jacqueline Bartone keeps three dogs, several unspecified reptiles and cats, and as many as a dozen birds, including an African Grey parrot and a macaw parrot.

But Bartone, a drama teacher, who lives with her playwright husband, has answered in court papers, under oath, that she keeps three dogs and five birds - period.

"I think it's because I'm rent-control," said Bartone, who pays just \$1,043 per month for a one-bedroom apartment. "And they want to up the rent.

"I can't leave. Where am I going to go? I teach. We're on one salary. I've been there 41 years. It's my home. It's not like I've been there eight months and I can go somewhere."

A lawyer for the landlord, Westman Realty, did not return a call seeking comment.

In court papers, an official with the building's management agency, Jay Cohen, said he was "shocked by what I observed. I can state emphatically that the kitchen was in nonlivable condition." It's an allegation Bartone and her lawyer, **Adam Leitman Bailey**, contest.

"She is not in violation of any laws and especially has not been a nuisance to the landlord or any other tenants," said Bailey.

Bartone and O'Hara share the apartment with Hoby, a 5-year-old Rhodesian Ridgeback, Ben, a 12-year-old mix, and Henry, a 5-year-old Australian Terrier. There are also several parakeets and an African Grey parrot.

"I've always loved animals," she said. "It's something innate in me. I find them innocent and friendly and lovable."

Bartone said she had some 15 letters of support from other tenants, including one from The New York Times' moral behavior expert, Randy Cohen.

"I've always found her to be a quiet and considerate neighbor," wrote The Ethicist.



GRRRR: Jacqueline Bartone, with her three dogs, faces eviction from her Upper West Side home.