

December 9, 1996

Oakwood Apartments
501 N. Roosevelt Blvd.
Falls Church, VA 22044

Gentlemen:

It is with some reluctance, and sadness, that I have to write you this letter to complain about a noisy tenant at Oakwood Apartments. However, a situation which I at first tried to manage myself, and subsequently tried to ignore, has not gone away, and instead has gotten worse, so that I find I have no choice but to complain to management in writing. I will begin by giving you the "bottom line," and will then expand upon this description with a detailed version of events. This will be a rather lengthy letter, so please bear with me and give me the courtesy of reading through it carefully at least once.

Summarized, the problem here is that for about three months now, teenage boys of junior high school and/or high school age living in apartment B716, and in particular their unruly teenage friends who frequently visit their apartment, have decided that they derive great enjoyment from repeatedly slamming basketballs and soccer balls into the floor of the passageway right outside the door of my apartment with great force, and by similarly stomping their feet as loud as they can right outside my apartment with great force (so great that the entire floor to my apartment shakes), with great frequency, but only when they are with their teenage peers, and never when they are with their parents. The older of the two brothers who lives in B716, and two of their older teenage friends (one tall, skinny youth with a long face, and the other a very large, robust and slightly overweight youth with a very short crew-cut haircut) are the principal culprits. I do not know the names of these people, and can only describe them by saying that they are Hispanic in appearance. I would estimate that the parents of the two brothers who live in apartment B716 probably know nothing about this business, and will probably deny these allegations when first confronted. I can assure you that the teenagers conducting this pattern of overt harassment (primarily the teenage visitors) believe themselves very clever and only perform these acts when there are no adult witnesses.

This business all began about three months ago when I heard a loud slamming noise against my door, and against the wall which connects my apartment with the interior passageway. I opened my door and found that three of these individuals were engaging in rough horseplay in the passageway, and that one of them, *while riding a bicycle inside the passageway*, had lost his balance and fallen against my door. I expressed my displeasure at the time, and they said it was an accident.

In the ensuing weeks I found that this same group of youths coming into and out of unit B716 were often bouncing basketballs and soccer balls in the passageway on the way to the elevator, and

sometimes playing brief (but noisy) impromptu soccer games in the elevator waiting area while waiting for an elevator to arrive. The result was a tremendous amount of disruption, with soccer balls often kicked against walls and doors to apartments with great force, and a large amount of ensuing noise and disruption. This activity would only go on for 2-3 minutes while these boys were waiting for an elevator, but it was always extremely disruptive, and extremely rude to the sensitivities of others.

After closely and regularly observing the situation (through the peep-hole in my door) and putting up with this type of occasional disturbance for 2 or 3 weeks, I confronted the perpetrators on 3 occasions that I can remember; the first two times were after I lost my cool *when soccer balls or basketballs were bounced off of my passageway wall and my apartment door*, and we exchanged angry words (through the closed door of my apartment). Realizing that I had not handled the situation properly, I decided the situation needed a cooling-off period, so I decided to just observe things for a while, thinking that if I stop yelling at these kids, maybe they will cool off and just stop what they now know is disruptive behavior. Unfortunately, it seems that several hot-headed and cocky young men probably misinterpreted my self-imposed cooling-off period as weakness, and had obviously decided that they knew how to “get my goat,” and that they liked playing this game, because what had been intermittent behavior now became virtually regular activity, occurring almost every time these visitors (usually in the company of one or both brothers who live at B716) would enter or leave the 7th floor of building B with basketballs or soccer balls. After a “cooling-off” period of about 3 weeks in which I waited and observed, without complaint, I confronted some of these young men in person, and reminded them (this time without shouting or using angry words) that the passageway in the apartment building was not a playground, and that there was no soundproofing whatsoever between activities in the passageway and the interior of each apartment (namely, that every word spoken in the passageway, and every noise of any kind, could be heard through people’s closed doors). The response I got 3 minutes later, when in spite of my entreaties, it started again, was the younger brother living in B716 saying, “I didn’t do it, they did,” while pointing at his friends with whom he plays almost every day.

Again I decided a cooling-off period was in order, and decided to wait and observe, hoping the situation would go away. Things were only quiet for a week or two, and the harassment started again, outside only *my* door, and always on the way downstairs, or right before getting in the elevator so that I never had time to confront the perpetrators before they escaped.

About two weeks ago, as one of the teenage visitors left apartment B716 very late at night (about 12:30 A.M. or 1:00 A.M.), immediately after walking past my apartment, he threw his basketball against the ceiling tiles repeatedly (7 or 8 times) with very great force (against a brown, water-logged section of false ceiling underneath the leaking water main on the 7th floor), destroying much of the tile, and leaving a mess on the floor which your maintenance personnel had to clean up the next day,

no doubt. This same thing happened again this past weekend. **This is plain and simple vandalism, and is something you should be aware of; in my opinion, it is being done because it occurs within 10 feet of the door to my apartment, no doubt giving considerable delight to the perpetrator (who is one of the teenage visitors to B716).**

During the past 3 or 4 weeks, the slamming of basketballs into the floor (soccer season being over, I guess) immediately outside my door, and the pounding and stomping of feet right outside my door, is becoming more and more blatant, and is occurring both as visitors depart, and arrive at, apartment B716. Lately, two of the teenage visitors are actually quite leisurely and brazen about the whole thing, as if daring me to confront them. In my opinion, either the perpetrators have been emboldened by my silence (it has been over 5 weeks since I last spoke to them about the problem), or are actually looking forward to a violent confrontation.

I have made a decision that I will not confront these punks anymore; it is fruitless to do so, and would only gratify them by letting them know that they have made me angry again. Besides, they often do this when together as a group, and the possibility of an angry, profane or violent interaction occurring, were I to confront a group of undisciplined youths in the heat of the moment, is considerable, given that my flash point on this matter is now quite sensitive. Under such circumstances, no one would win--everyone would lose--and the situation would no doubt only get worse.

I am hoping and expecting that Oakwood's management will hold the adult tenants who signed the contract with you for unit B716 responsible for the behavior not only of what I presume are their own sons, but for all those who visit their apartment. (The biggest problem seems to be two or three of the teenage visitors, exacerbated by the fact that the two young men in B716 whom they are visiting seem unable and unwilling to control the behavior of the friends with whom they play almost every day.) I want this behavior by all persons entering and leaving apartment B716 to stop immediately, and I am depending on Oakwood's management to do whatever is necessary to make this happen. The parents of the two boys who live in B716 are usually not home at all in the evening until midnight or 1:00 A.M.; I believe they may be professional musicians, because I have many times seen them loading and unloading large speakers in-and-out of vehicles in the parking lot, and wheeling this sound equipment in-and-out of their apartment on dollies; I say this in the way of emphasizing that you will probably meet with strong initial denial from the parents, who may have no idea this behavior is going on. I expect the two teenage brothers living in B716 to deny everything, and if that does not work, to attempt to use the "plausible denial" gambit by saying "our friends may have done it, we didn't."

I have lived at Oakwood since August 5, 1995, almost a year-and-a-half now, and am considering a one-year renewal of my lease. I consider myself a good tenant, inasmuch as my rent is paid every month, and I do not believe anyone has ever registered a complaint against me. I do not want to move if I do not have to; neither do I want to become engaged in a running dispute, or guerilla

warfare, with my neighbors. On the other hand, it is clear to me now that if I do nothing and just continue to "take it," this group of increasingly emboldened teenagers will continue to harass me and disturb my peace-of-mind. Each week that I allow this to continue, I lose a little more of my self respect; and the angrier I become, the more likely there will be a violent confrontation, which would serve no one well were it to occur.

The only serious mistake I may have made is that I have delayed until now (about 3 months or so into this problem) before informing management--but I didn't want to make waves, and was hoping the problem would go away, so I'm sure you can understand.

I have never complained about a problem with any other tenant on the seventh floor, so believe me, I am not one to make up stories, or to "cry wolf." This problem is real, and I am depending upon Oakwood to impose the proper discipline upon the occupants of B716 *and their visitors*. [It is entirely possible that one or both of the principal troublemakers (the two teenage visitors to B716) also reside at Oakwood, since I have seen them on the grounds frequently, but I cannot be sure.]

Now that I have taken the plunge and have registered a formal complaint, I am going to keep a log of such occurrences, and each and every occurrence of harassment by the two teenagers in B716 and/or their friends will be written down and reported to you.

*I look forward to hearing from you, in writing, regarding what steps you have taken with the adult residents of B716 to ensure that **ALL** of these incidents of harassment come to a complete stop.*

I should not have to apologize for anything, or live in fear, or move to another apartment; I have the proven record as a good tenant. I look forward to living in peace again, and truly hope you can forcefully and unambiguously handle this matter in a way that will bring an immediate end to these actions without spurring retaliation by the perpetrators.

Sincerely,

Douglas P. Horne
Apartment B713