

She Knew They Weren't Utility Men

New York

"When the men started to break the door down, I knew it wasn't Con Ed," said 56-year-old Ruby Baker, the victim of a bungled early morning drug raid Saturday by undercover narcotics police posing as utility repairmen.

With New York State's strict new drug law 20 minutes old, police were about to make their first big "bust"—the seizure of a kilogram (2.2 pounds) of cocaine from an apartment at 1005 St. Nicholas Avenue in upper Manhattan.

But the plainclothes policemen, who had a no-knock warrant, went to 1003 St. Nicholas Avenue, where Mrs. Baker lives.

"I was in the bed sleeping," Mrs. Baker recalled later, "when the doorbell rang. When I asked who it was they told me they were Con Ed (utility) men.

"I said: 'At this time of night?'

"They said: 'You have a gas leakage.'"

Mrs. Baker checked her stove and phoned a downstairs neighbor to see if there was indeed a gas leak in the building. There wasn't, and she went to the

door to tell the "Con Ed men."

The police replied with sledgehammers.

"When the men started breaking the door down I knew it wasn't Con Ed and I got scared thinking they might be burglars, out to murder me."

She said she ran to the closed fire escape window of her third floor apartment and broke the window with her hand and fist, suffering severe lacerations.

But when she got out on the fire escape and looked down "there were two guys on the street with pistols drawn and pointed at me.

She continued to run, however, slipping on her own blood at one point, and made it to her neighbor's apartment. The narcotics agents, by now realizing their mistake, came down, apologized, and then rushed her to a hospital where she was treated and released.

Deputy Chief John Scharoch, the commanding officer of the police narcotics division, contended that his men identified themselves as police when they broke in. Mrs. Baker, however, said the men did not do so until they found her bleeding in her neighbor's apartment.

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