

Kids' Spirits Undampened

By CARMEN VIGLUCCI

Elmira Southside — Kids will be kids, flood or not.

So there at the evacuation center at St. Mary's Southside School gym sat five pre-teens gaily playing cards even though they had been routed from their homes some six days before and had no idea when they could return home.

"It's a blast," was how Suann Preston of Lormore Street summed it up for the five.

Protected by typhoid shots and armed with the eternal optimism of youth, the five praised the food at the center.

"We have turkey and ham and scrambled eggs and it's all real good," said Ed Considine, also of Lormore Street in Southside Elmira, one of the hardest hit communities in the entire South-Tier.

There were more than children at St. Mary's Southside where Father John J. Deary is pastor. There were people of all ages, many perhaps looking older than their years.

Cots lined the walls and people lay on them even though it was the middle of the afternoon. There were cribs and babies and toys and on the stage a television blared away. But the trial and tribulations of the afternoon soap opera crowd could hardly match the real-life drama unfolding in Elmira and no one was watching.

"It's a bore," said young Bob Sickles of television, who wanted to talk about the helicopters he watched landing outside of the school. Soldiers also were quartered at the old school nearby, which became one of main centers of activity as the area struggled to come back from the flood's knockdown punch.

Life goes on, and one sign of it was the wedding reception held at the evacuation center last Saturday. Father Leary did it up brown for the newlyweds right down to white tablecloth, candles and champagne.

The bride's father's house had been destroyed by the flood.

Mr. and Mrs. Floyd Clark's plight was similar to that of many in town. Not only routed from their home on Bulford Lane, they also were unable to contact their children living in Arizona, Maryland and Allentown, Pa., to tell them they were safe.

Asked what their plans are now, Mrs. Clark said, "We can't go back home. We'll just stay here as long as we can."

Many in Elmira's Southside were fortunate that St. Mary's Church was there in this, their most trying time of need



Sandra Teed, 1, one of the youngest evacuees.



Playing cards while away evacuation time at St. Mary's Southside for Bob Sickles, Mary Sickles, Suann Preston, Ed Considine and Mike Capozza.



Army truck at Ss. Peter and Paul's.



Soldiers bivouacked at St. Mary's Southside.