

'Socialization' a Key In Pre-School

By MARTIN TOOMBS

Photos by Ben Susso



A room packed with possible learning experiences greets 15 pre-school children each morning at the St. Charles Borromeo Convent. A total of 30 three and four year olds participate in the program, held in the convent community room under the direction of Sister Rachel.

New this year, the pre-school program has several different aims. Preparing the children for later education is important, but many other areas of development are worked on. Socialization is necessary, as Sister Rachel said in a letter to the parents: "Learning to socialize, to interact with varied types of personalities can be quite challenging at times. Here, a child learns the patterns that our society will demand from him. We have to help him to

adjust to these facets of socializing. If a child can't identify, relate or interact with his own peers, it will be difficult later on to build upon these standards set for us by our society." The opportunity for this experience is not always available to pre-schoolers.

Sister Rachel comes to her youngsters from a varied background.

She has experience teaching in kindergarten through eighth grade. She also did a stint at Cardinal Mooney High School, teaching the Child Development course. She moved from theory to practice when she participated in the Andrews Center, a foster home run by sisters. Sister Rachel says she gained a great deal of respect for the problems of

parents during her experience as a foster parent.

The former community room of the convent has been well adapted to its new use. It is carpeted, and has tables and chairs. A teacher's desk is pushed against the wall; Sister Rachel explains that she never sits behind it anyway. Everything in the room is labelled, opening opportunities for word discovery by the children. Sister Rachel has constructed games and other activities herself which are placed around the room for the children to use. Numbers and colors are also in full view. Field trips are part of the program.

Well received so far by the parents, the program could be expanded in the future to include a morning and an afternoon session.



From the left: Kelli Probst pauses to reflect on the day's activities. When asked what she was making, Stacie Schneider said

"a bird." Sister Rachel settles the children down, and tells them a story. Top, Kelli practices her coordination. Just missed it!

South Mall: Lofty Vision Or Ominous Portent?

By CARMEN VIGLUCCI

St. Anthony's Church, whose patron would never mind, was at the bottom of the Madison Avenue hill while sitting gothically on its crest was the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, overlooking the neighborhood in the best medieval fashion.

That's the way it was in the South End of Albany and that's the way it still is — almost. The Cathedral and St. Anthony's have survived wholesale renewal but now stand dwarfed by the Rockefelleresque buildings which collectively make up what has come to be called the South Mall.

Admittedly the South Mall — officially it is Empire State Plaza — is a long way from Nunda but the fact that part of the taxes each of us pays went into this \$1 billion project should bring it a bit closer to home.

When Gov. Carey earlier this year reluctantly asked for what has been termed the final appropriation (\$88 million) to complete the mall by next year the total cost went up to \$985 million, about four times what state planners projected at its beginning in the early 1960s. Built to accommodate state offices, the mall consists of four 23-story buildings, a 44-story main tower, two auditoriums, reflecting pools, a dish-shaped edifice, five levels of underground parking and shops.

It has been called various names, mostly deprecating ones such as New York's Vietnam (the only way to get out of it is to complete it), Rocky's Erector Set, Brasilia North.

The former governor describes it in loftier phraseology. "These values are what lift us above the scurrying ant heap of those absorbed only in survival," says the same man who once had the state and its citizenry embarked on an expensive bomb shelter building campaign.

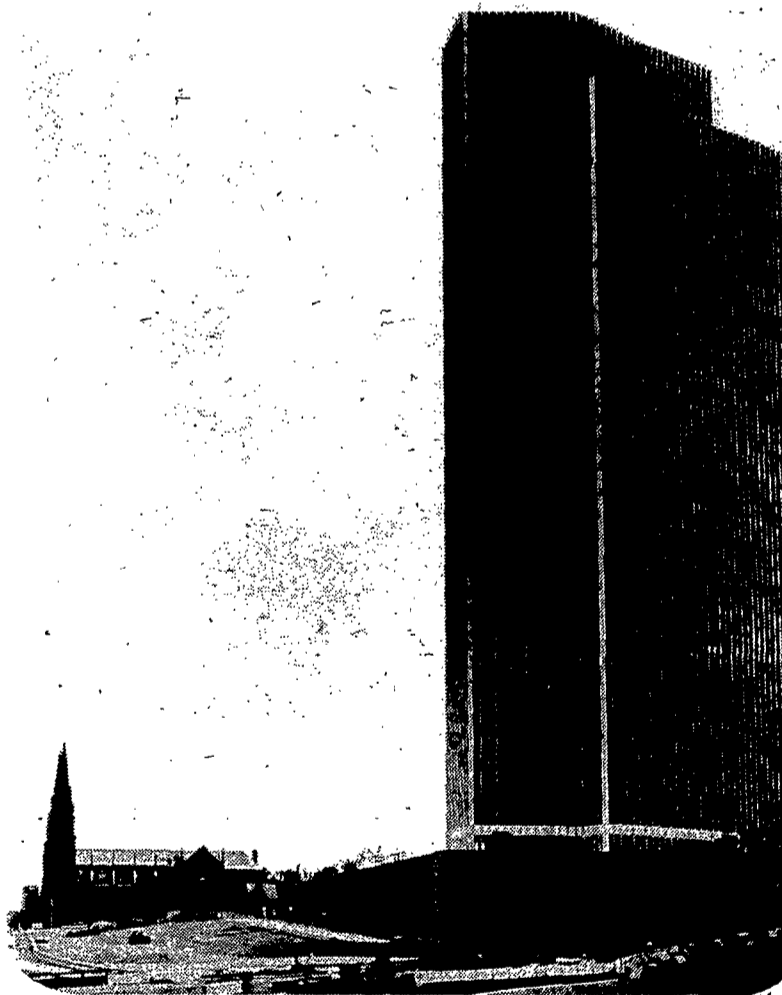
Someone in justifying this Brasilia North said it replaced a "one-time swatch of decayed tenements and bordellos." True, the neighborhoods were a bit tacky in spots but they also were home to thousands of citizens who were left with no place to go when the state moved in.

The Albany diocesan newspaper, The Evangelist, asked in 1970, "Can we afford the splendor of the South Mall?" The newspaper was concerned over the lack of housing in the 98.5 acre complex. Actually about 7 1/2 acres were earmarked for high rise, low-to-middle income housing, but that never got off the ground. High cost was given as the reason and the area has been dubbed "a graveyard" by the diocesan newspaper.

One high-rise project did go up, under the auspices of the Capital Area Council of Churches. It is for older citizens in the middle income range but many are afraid of living in the apartments which sit in the otherwise sterile and home-less shadows of the mall itself.

The Cathedral itself, modeled after the one in Cologne, Germany, is a cause of some secondary concern. The rectory was taken by the state with the idea that a new one would be built within the mall. But when church officials realized that state stipulations as to style made the price prohibitive, a new and less expensive rectory went up just outside the mall's perimeter.

The future of the Cathedral is in doubt. Father Kenneth Doyle, editor of The



Evangelist, said that there are three options — 1, replacing it gradually; 2, expensive renovation; 3, tearing it down and consecrating another church as the cathedral.

Father Doyle said that Church officials may go to the diocese at large to find out what the people want done.

"My own feeling, and it is strictly unofficial, is that the Cathedral should be maintained in that area. But with the present economic situation and the poverty surrounding the area, the Church could not expend large amounts on renovating the building."

"My own guess," says Father Doyle, "is that it will be repaired gradually, as becomes necessary. I hope it remains as a religious presence, much the same as St. Patrick's across from the Rockefeller Center in New York City."

If it weren't for the fact that we are all paying for the South Mall, perhaps it would not mean much to those outside of the Capital City area. Yet, there are those who see ominous symbolism in the fact that the state can afford to build such huge, futuristic buildings, squeezing out people and religious institutions that can't keep up the economic pace. And it doesn't help the complex public relations-wise to realize it is going up under the political aegis of one of history's richest men who, in the midst of world hunger, lack of housing, liberalized abortion laws, was still able to say that the \$1 billion complex was necessary because "mean structures breed small vision."