

## Big City and Its Kids Do Mix

By ROBERTA GRATZ

Rising taxes, dirty air, growing crime rate, outlandish rents are all enough to drive many people as far out of New York City as commuting will allow. Survival here, they say, is a struggle.

And if they have one or more children survival here, they argue, is impossible.

Troubles are multiplied by school problems, and all the necessity to provide entertainment for the children deprived of the suburban backyard, especially those leaving, the tot stage.

Still scores of parents not only manage to survive but to accomplish the feat with a great deal of satisfaction. What they all seem to have in common is imagination, fierce determination, endurance and their own passionate attachment to the excitement that spells New York.

Entertaining city children isn't difficult when they reach the age when interest in museums, puppet shows or sight-seeing can be sustained. But the mothers of younger children often have to make more of an effort.

Take one mother — her 3-year-old son gets bored with the same old playground. But he loves ("ugh") to take long walks through Central Park as a diversion.

"He adores a bus or subway ride to anywhere," she adds, "but taxis he finds dull. Any water fountain, particularly

the Bethesda Fountain, mesmerizes him and provides great entertainment."

Another mother who has a son, 4½, and a daughter, 3, thinks the key to surviving in New York with children is to "take them with you everywhere. My kids get the biggest kick out of the escalator at Bloomingdale's — or the local supermarket or even an early dinner in Chinatown."

Perhaps best of all are the things a Bronx mother finds to interest her 4-year-old son around the house like helping her when she sews or cooks. When she peels potatoes she turns the project into an elementary math game and when she works at her sewing machine she gives him material scraps or thread spools to play with.

Two books are just out designed to assist just those city parents always looking for new ideas, particularly for children beyond the playground age. Claire Berman's "A Great City for Kids" (Bobbs-Merrill) and Florence Weiner's "How to Survive in New York with Children" (Corinthian-Scribners).

Both offer a variety of information — parks or museums to discover, where to take what lessons, even where to play archery. Claire Berman's book gives an extensive list of children's theaters, special libraries, places where every kind of sport can be enjoyed. Florence Weiner's book includes park maps, a list or organizations

serving children with special health needs, and a special chapter on the teen age scene.

Helpful as the books are — doesn't everyone collect guides on where to dine, where to find the out-of-the-way shops, where to find with you everywhere of old New York? — mothers have been surviving without handbooks for years. Still, says one: "You have to be intelligent about living in this city with children and one way to be intelligent about it is referring to informative books."

For some mothers, however, the whole effort is overwhelming and seemingly hopeless. When one mother of a son, 2½, and daughter, 1, was asked how she survives here she half laughed and half cried: "The trouble is I'm not surviving."

Having spent a year away from the city she is finding it difficult to readjust. Her main complaints are about the "dirt and inaccessibility of any clean play areas." Even the newer and more creative playgrounds are too crowded, she says, and appear to be designed simply to increase the sales of detergents.

"Even the supermarkets," she moans, "are appalling. In the shopping centers outside the city they have rides, gumball machines and play areas where you can leave the children. And if not that, at least they don't have roaches at the checkout counter."



A "Survival" area