

A Flower Stand Enlists In Battle for Bryant Park

By LAURIE JOHNSTON

In the gentlest of aggressions against the drug dealers and derelicts of Bryant Park, chrysanthemums and roses and carnations and daisies have established a gallant little beachhead outside the park's seedy northwest entrance at 42d Street and the Avenue of the Americas.

Faye Brown and Dolores Valerie, marching under fresh colors into the long battle to save the park for the general public, opened the Bryant Park Flower Market Thursday in the little corner plaza, just behind a hot-dog wagon.

The two were sent into action to help clear the plaza and its stone benches, as well as the nearby stairs to the park, of less acceptable entrepreneurs — the panhandlers and the hawkers who inquire, "Smoke?" "Coke?" or "Speed?"

'It's Definitely Fort Apache'

If it seemed like sending Eliza Doolittle to clean up Covent Garden, the two young women were unfazed.

"It's definitely Fort Apache," Miss Brown said, as she and Miss Valerie, her assistant, adroitly fended off some of the area's more sociable denizens. "But I can handle all kinds of people, and we're going to make this like a European flower market."

A few minutes later, as the lunch-hour crowd of office workers began to discover the new stand, Miss Brown was selling carnations (40 cents apiece, \$4.50 a dozen) with pink ribbons to Phyllis DeGironimo, who handed them to two co-workers being taken out for a birthday luncheon.

"I do love flowers," said Miss DeGironimo, a computer-company employee, "and I can't believe this is here, suddenly, right on our way."

The commercial flower stand, like the bookstalls inside the park, is a compact metal "container" dramatized by a jaunty, 20-foot-high canvas canopy over decorative iron supports. It contains a refrigerator, shelves and a work counter, and is designed to fold into itself for sundown lockup.

Like the bookstalls, too, it is part of a \$300,000 sprucing-up of Bryant Park initiated two years ago by the Parks Council, a volunteer group. The project has been joined by the Bryant Park Restoration Corporation, a nonprofit group organized last year by the New York Public Library and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund to clean up the library's backyard. Andrew Heiskell, chairman of the library board, is also chairman of the corporation.

The flower stand cost \$30,000. Two-thirds was paid by the shop owner, Michael Weinstein, an Upper West Side restaurateur, and the rest came from Parks Council contributors.

The private, voluntary projects do not represent a turnover of Bryant Park to private interests, according to Parks Commissioner Gordon J. Davis.

"Like the commercial bookstalls and the café planned for the library's Fifth Avenue steps, the flower market is an amenity, designed to fill a vacuum and keep deterioration at bay," Mr. Davis said. "The police can



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The Bryant Park Flower Market stands at 42d Street and Avenue of the Americas.

only do so much with low-grade offenders."

One Bryant Park drug dealer was less impressed with the resort to

flower power.

"That don't mean nothing," he said. "That's honest business. It won't affect us either way, except maybe bring

more people to the park." Eyeing the brilliant display thoughtfully, he added, "Maybe I'll start giving free flowers."