

PTA tackle Catholic school growth needs

"PARTICIPATION" was the theme adopted by the Parents-Teachers Association of the Lady of Perpetual Help Preparatory School as they prepared to tackle the needs of the school in a big way this year.

The school, founded in 1970 by the Catholic Church of Jamaica and Cayman, is situated on an 8 1/2-acre site on Walker's Road next door to the Cayman Islands High School and the Cayman Preparatory School — another church-organized primary institution.

In the initial building programme adequate classroom space was provided in a two-storey structure for projected growth of the school up to the final year of grade school. Each year since its inception the school has added a class and at the end of the 1975-76 school year, it sent its first graduates to the Cayman Islands High School.

To all outward appearances the venture has been a successful one if you measure it by the progress of the students and the quality of the staff being provided (all teachers are fully-qualified) and of course, all will agree that these are the best yardsticks to use.

However, academic success does not always walk hand in hand with financial well-being, and like other private educational institutions founded in the island, the problem of adequate funding is a constant companion of its day-to-day operation

The school operates on a tight budget based on the collection of fees from its 200 students — approximately only 50 of these come from Catholic families. These are calculated to cover the major expenses but leave no room for further development of the school or the little extras necessary for smooth operation.

The latter over the years have been furnished by an active PTA through



Members of the Executive Council of the Lady of Perpetual Help Preparatory School Parents-Teachers Association. From left, back row: Mrs. Patsy Healy, Mrs. Rose Bodden, Father Jackman, Mr. Desmond Seales [president, standing], Mr. Bill McGee, Mr. Peter Balls; front row: Mrs. Christine Dyer, Sister Sheila Marie [Principal], Mrs. Ann Stafford, Mrs. Karen Hunter and Mrs. Angela Squires [staff member].

various fund-raising efforts. Using imagination spiced with a lot of zest this group, under the guidance of its executive committee, organise several functions each year, supported mainly by parents and teachers, to raise the necessary money.

Organisations do get tired, however, and as time passes more and more of the effort seem to remain with a few people. plus of course, the never-complaining staff.

This year, the association under its new President, **Desmond Seales**, decided it was time to re-assess its role both in the school's growth and development, and its contribution to the life of the community generally.

Members recognised that (1) participation by parents in the association's efforts needed a boost; (2) there was a desperate need for provision of wholesome family entertainment within the community — a lack recognised by many as a big contributor to the problems of the juvenile; and (3) the school needed to

take steps NOW to reach beyond the academic and provide ways and means to promote the children's physical development as well.

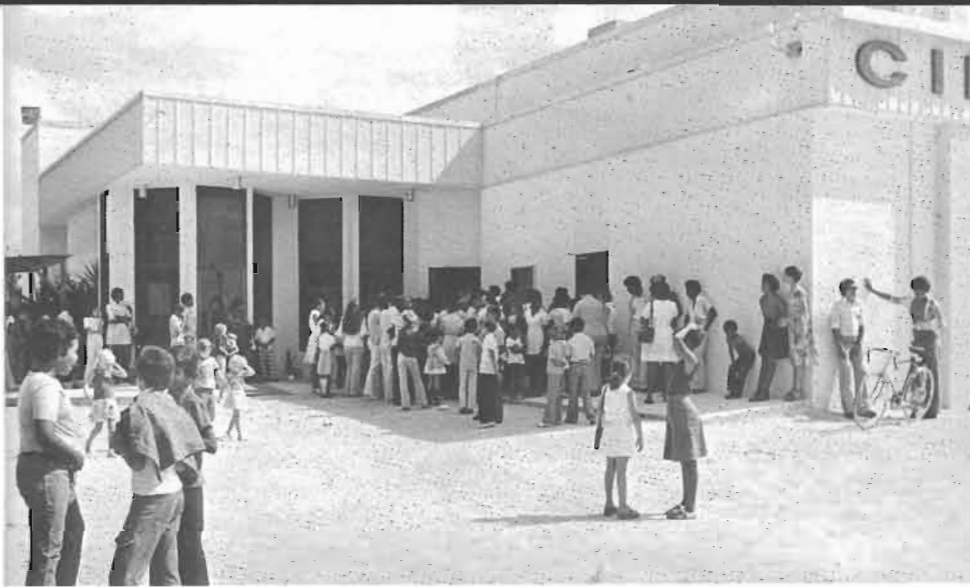
Subsequent planning has reflected the determined effort of members to meet the three needs. Relaying its desire to actively participate in the development of the school's facilities to the School Board, and the staff, the association sought advice from both those areas in the matter of priorities.

THE PRIORITIES LISTED

Topping the list, they found, were (1) the equipping of the additional restroom space provided on the second floor of the school building for older children — a matter made more urgent with its full-capacity enrolment, and (2) the development of the playfield.

The latter had been for some time on the PTA's list and some effort had been made to help there from time to time.

The next question was how to raise



A part of the large crowd which waited patiently for extra tickets at one of the Film Fiestas which have benefited PTA funds.

the necessary capital for the accomplishment of these goals. Bearing in mind the three needs, the association came up with a unique set of "fun-fund-raising ideas" in which the entire school family could become involved, the community would appreciate, and hopefully, would yield a profit after all the expenses were cleared.

The Film Fiesta, the first of these ideas, was an instant success, drawing overwhelming public response. Disney films brought in specially for the occasions and shown at The Cinema on three Saturdays during November and December, provided three hours of "fun" entertainment both for the young and the "young at heart". The last session held the extra thrill and excitement of Santa's visit for the boys and girls.

From these, sufficient funds were realised to purchase all the necessary restroom equipment with a few extras thrown in like soap and paper dispensers and a large sink for cleaning up after painting classes. These were promptly installed by **Claude Beaulieu**, a parent who volunteered his services.

PLAYING FIELD PLAN

Simultaneously plans moved ahead on the playing field development. **Chris Thorne** volunteered to prepare a plan of the present grounds, and the sports committee under its chairman, **Arek Joseph**, worked at formulating a master plan for its development.

The latter — a five-phase projection unveiled at the November general meeting — includes (1) a soccer pitch which can be utilised for other organised games and a 220-yard running track; (2) separate play areas

for junior and senior age groups; (3) netball surfaces; (4) tennis courts; and (5) a swimming-pool, properly fenced and screened for safety. Proper landscaping of the grounds which will include banks of trees for shade, will be carried out as each phase is developed.

Already clearing and levelling of the ground has begun and the school was able to hold its annual Christmas programme — a candlelight carol service in which parents and visitors were invited to participate — in the open air. Mothers in a marathon effort produced 120 choir gowns for the girls for the occasion and tiny tots, after struggling through the outstanding performance, were rewarded with a fire-works display organised by the PTA.

The traditional family Christmas idea was further promoted when the school invited parents to join the next

day in the fun and excitement of its annual Christmas party, complete with Santa's visit.

The first phase of the field's development is expected to be completed in time for Sports Day, February 7. Some fathers have volunteered to assist Mrs. **Jan Pierera**, responsible for the school's physical education programme, in training work-outs with students, for this event.

Plans for the new year are all geared to appeal to the whole island community, and families can make a note of these dates now. The association, inspired by the tremendous response to the Film Fiestas in George Town, plan to give the kids in the outlying districts a chance to share in the fun, too. Films have been ordered and a special districts' tour is being arranged.

Films will be shown in the town hall in each area — West Bay, January 31; Bodden Town, February 1; North Side, February 2; East End, February 3; George Town, February 4.

A date for all parents and teachers of primary school children to remember is March 3, when the island-wide talent contest for children ages 4-12, will take place. Prior to this, auditions will be carried out in each district to determine the best participants and these will then compete in the finals on March 3 in George Town.

Topping off the year will be the giant Fair Day — slated for Easter Monday on the school grounds. Plans to provide a super day of family fun and entertainment are well on the way and include the very special treat of a real merry-go-round, imported for the occasion. Who is invited to attend? Why YOU and YOU, of course — with all the family. **N**

Mrs. Nadia Propper [left] and Sister Sheila Marie share a light moment with Dr. Shirley Cridland and Dr. Joyce Tate [right] who addressed the PTA recently on the subject of Nutrition for the child from pre-natal stage through age 12.

