

## Looking Up

Before last year's Bicentennial, the Fourth of July was a time of sullen heat and the sputter of occasional illegal firecrackers in a joyless city from which everyone who could manage it would flee. What New Yorkers learned from the Bicentennial and remembered this year was not only how to celebrate the holiday but also how to celebrate their city. As they watched the sailboats on the rivers, or the fireworks that framed both shores, they discovered Manhattan as an island. People flocked to the tops of skyscrapers for the spectacular views. They rode on ferries and walked and sat at the water's edge.

The action spread from lower Manhattan up the East and West Sides; there were almost as many picnickers on Randall's Island and along Riverside Drive as at the Battery. The festivals in the network of old downtown streets were classic urban theater. For rooftop viewers, the city, with its massed skyscrapers ringed by rivers

and the sea, was the spectacle. The miracle of its geography came alive.

If anything marred the pleasure, it was only that some of the city's facilities showed the strain. Access to the parks along the edges of the rivers was difficult and hazardous, and limited facilities created problems of use and debris. But this awakening to New York's unique recreational resources has been the dream of its planners for many years. The holiday is over, but a sense of New York's island beauty remains.