

Writer Holds Up Building of Skyscraper

Rebels to Give Up \$72-a-Month Flat on W. 48th St.

By **SIDNEY E. ZION**

William A. Reuben sipped vintage champagne (Mumm's 1962) in his \$72-a-month apartment yesterday and asked, with a broad smile, "How many human beings have a chance to hold up, even for a few minutes, a giant proposition like this?"

Mr. Reuben, a tall, heavy-set, 53-year-old writer, was clearly enjoying his opportunity to hold up, for at least a few months, the building of a skyscraper that will form part of the addition to the Rockefeller Center complex on 48th Street, between the Avenue of the Americas and Seventh Avenue.

"As far as I know," L. Reyner Samet, one of the lawyers representing Rockefeller Center said yesterday, "Mr. Reuben is the last one, the only individual tenant left that we have not made an agreement with."

Mr. Samet, who has been handling the negotiations with Mr. Reuben, said there were still "a couple" of business leases to buy out in the area. The center is acquiring the property from 47th to 50th Street between Seventh and the Avenue of the Americas.

The lawyer added that "it seems to be a lot easier dealing with businessmen than with authors."

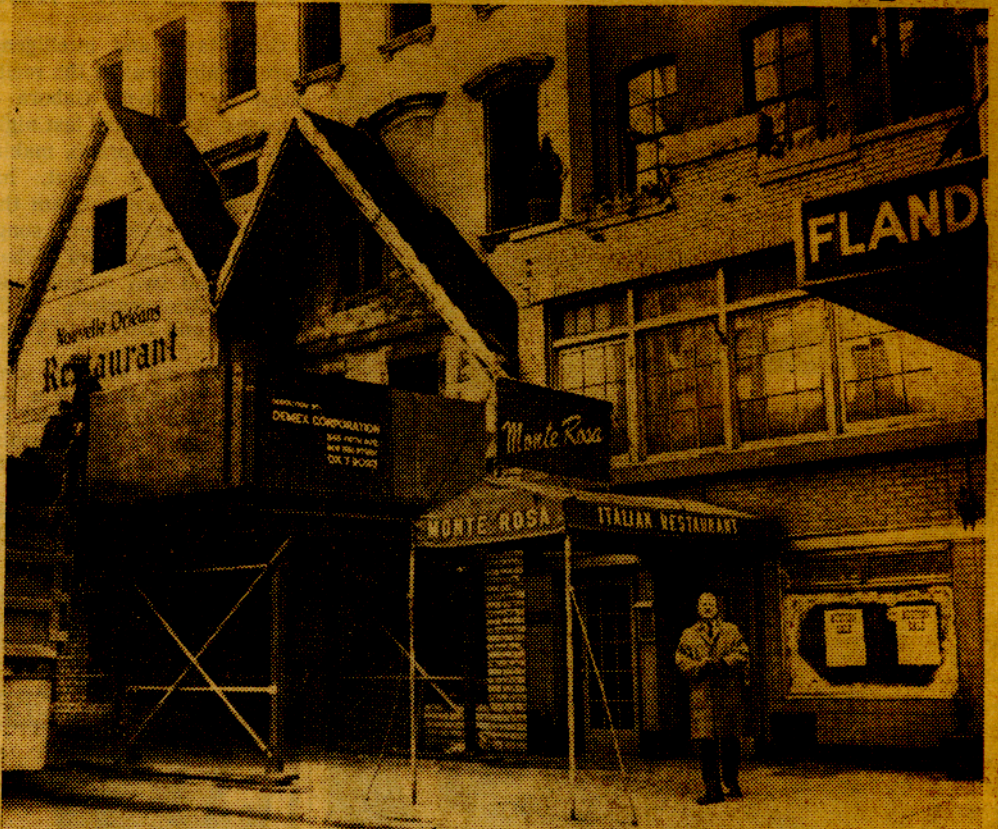
But Mr. Reuben says: "I can't communicate with them. They don't understand. I tell them that I've got a deadline on a book and they don't seem to understand. I suppose from the beginning of history people interested in money have believed that what they are doing is more important than what people concerned with the arts are doing."

Who knows who the wealthiest man in Vienna was when Mozart was there?" he added.

Mr. Reuben, whose books include "The Atom Spy Hoax" and "The Mark Fein Case," has been living for nine years in a 2½-room apartment at 132 West 48th Street.

The prospective tenant for the site is the Celanese Corporation, a textile concern. While neither the company nor Rockefeller Center, Inc., would comment on this, Mr. Samet confirmed that Celanese was to take the site.

Rockefeller Center has al-



William A. Reuben outside building at 132 West 48th Street, where he has an apartment



The New York Times
Mr. Reuben at home

ready announced that a 54-story Esso Building will be constructed between 49th and 50th Streets and a 48-story building housing McGraw-Hill, Inc., the magazine and book publishing concern, will go up between 48th and 49th Street.

Rockefeller Center has been

acquiring properties and leaseholds in the area for about two years. Until recently the company had carried on its acquisitions quietly through different corporations in an apparent effort to keep the prices down.

Prices Generally High

For property owners and leaseholders, however, the prices have generally been high.

"When a fellow owns a building or has a lease there's not a damn thing we can do but pay," Mr. Samet said. "We have no condemnation power. It's just a matter of settling on a price."

Sometimes no offer is high enough—in the early nineteenthies the R.C.A. Building in Rockefeller Center was erected around Hurley Brothers & Daley's bar and grill, which is still on 49th Street and the Avenue of the Americas.

Mr. Reuben has no lease on his apartment, but the building is rent-controlled and he is what is known as a "statutory tenant."

As such, he can be forced to move, but the proceedings, through the Rent Commission and the courts, could take four to eight months.

Mr. Reuben said he had been "harassed" by six people in the last few months to leave his

apartment, which originally rented for \$100 a month. In the last month he has received reductions from the Rent Commission to the present \$72 on the ground that required services had not been provided.

Mr. Reuben insists that he is "not looking to make money on the Rockefellers."

He says that his only interest is in completing a book on the Alger Hiss case for Simon & Schuster. His deadline is in March.

"To show you how they think," Mr. Reuben said, "they tell me that I'll always have deadlines. And then they ask me how I can live in a building without neighbors and on a street that's almost deserted."

"Imagine that? What's better for a writer? It's like being in Provincetown in the winter, except the action is just around the corner."

Despite his asserted disinterest in money, Mr. Reuben notes that his brother, Mark, sold a four-year lease on his restaurant, the Absinthe House on 48th Street, for "a fantastic figure."

"Mark's advice to me was to think of the most unimaginable price possible and then double it," Mr. Reuben said. "That's what he did."