

Long's dancing doughnuts

The Do-nut Shop at 26 Mississaga Street in Orillia was a long and narrow store, and the proprietor, Herb Long, had his doughnut-making machine set up right in the storefront window.

As I remember it, about four o'clock every afternoon Mr. Long would bring the big steel (I think) bowl of doughnut batter to the front; position it on the machine and start to wind out doughnuts into the smoking fat in the vat below.

Passersby stopped to watch and soon the shop would be crowded with customers. A few of the watchers were children; and on Saturdays children would come along by themselves and press their little faces against the glass, gazing at goodies they could never have.

My heart ached for those children. I knew what it was like not to be able to have anything you wanted. It was 1931 and the worst part of the Great Depression was grinding the poor more than ever.

I worked at the Do-nut Shop then and Mr. Long was feeling the pinch, too. All he

could afford to pay me was \$7 a week. That's right, kiddies, not \$7 an hour, \$7 a week. The

THIS AND THAT



By May Sears

assistant baker, older than I by about 10 years, got more. Jean rolled out pie and tart shells, added fillings and topped the

pies ready for the oven. She iced and decorated cakes, rolled and cut out cookies. She helped me in the shop when there were more customers than I could handle.

As well as waiting on customers I folded boxes, greased pans, cleaned pans, washed dishes and kept the showcases clean and neat. We were never idle. And Mr. Long worked with us and kept us in good humor by telling ha-ha stories.

The shop was open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. six days a week. There were no town buses yet. I walked the 12 blocks home, sat with my feet in a basin of

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salt water while I ate my supper. If I had a date, I had to wash my hair before I went out: I came home smelling to high heaven of frying fat. My boy friend's male friends called me the Doughnut Queen.

I've left the master baker, the star of the show and who should have top billing, to the last. Herb Long was a compulsive baker, always trying new recipes. He would get slightly miffed if Jean and I didn't show sufficient enthusiasm for the samples he tried on us.

I felt sorry that business didn't keep up with the

quantity of baking Mr. Long did. He did, however, make use of the stale (as opposed to fresh from the oven) items. Hand-outs were freely given to transients, and there were many at that time, hungry men who were constantly on the move, looking for jobs they couldn't find.

The long, narrow shop at 26 Mississaga Street is much as it was when I worked there 58 years ago. Except that there is not the tantalizing odor of doughnuts, pies, cakes and buns emanating from the open door. And no doughnut machine in the window; nor glass cases full of baked goods

inside. Instead there are newspapers, bus tickets and lottery tickets and maybe a few paintings for sale. For, whereas Herb Long was an artist with flour, eggs, sugar and butter, Jim Lawler, the proprietor of City Tickets, works with brushes, paints and canvas.

When I go into Lawler's shop to buy city bus tickets, often it is as crowded as it was on those late afternoons so long ago when Herb Long's dancing doughnuts drew crowds to watch and buy.