

## Pancake Breakfasts

by *Helen Gowan*

I wish I could remember all the facts about the Optimists' pancake breakfasts in the golden past. I wasn't here when they started as a fund raiser for the four Optimist groups which used to gather Windsor Gardens residents by the score, the Breakfast Optimists, a lunchtime group, an evening group, and Columbine Optimists, a women only group.

As a Columbine Optimist, back in the early '90's, I started working at the annual pancake breakfasts, first bundling knife, fork, and spoon in a paper napkin, ready for the customers, then setting up and clearing tables, and finally filling pitchers with an orange drink, all set up for the servers who replenished each table's supply of beverage and coffee, syrup, butter, cream and sugar. Residents and their friends lined up to enter the auditorium, pass the fry tables, pick up a paper plate with three ample pancakes and two sausages, and be directed to tables where the condiments for pancake breakfasts awaited. You came with your own friends, or stopped to talk with neighbors, or made small talk with total strangers, friends for a morning. A pleasant feature was the awarding of door prizes cajoled out of local merchants by energetic Optimists.

Local politicians showed up to meet and greet their constituents. Polly Flobek, our local councilwoman, donned an apron and served up seconds. One year she had to use a crutch to get around, but she cheerfully made the rounds encouraging refills.

Bill Ramsay, known as "Mr. Optimist" to one and all, darted around greeting diners, while a cadre of vigorous men, clad in white aprons and chef's hats, mixed batter and flipped flapjacks as fast as they could for several hours, as long as the stream of Windsor Garden folk kept on consuming "all you can eat" pancakes and coffee. They, along with us women servers, held out to the finish, cleaning and carting off trash barrels, mopping up spills, scrubbing griddles and storing supplies for the next year's pancake breakfast.

As I said at the beginning of this piece, I don't remember all the details of the breakfasts, but they were a fun way to meet people, and the pancakes were good. I'm planning to celebrate by going to breakfast with my neighbors this month. You come, too!