

RED ARROW DINER

Manchester, New Hampshire

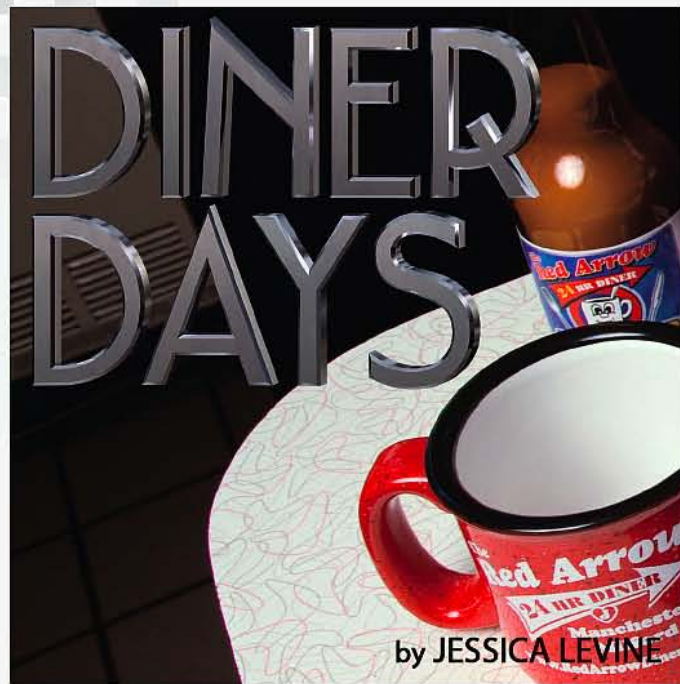
Presidential campaigns are brutal affairs. Taloned paparazzi circle for slip-ups, celebrity blowhards nip at exposed Achilles', and fifty-cent Honey Buns are dinners *du jour*. What White House hopefuls need is a good plate of bacon and eggs. And Manchester, New Hampshire's Red Arrow Diner is a rest stop for you, me, and the wary politician.

Just ask Carol Sheehan. She's owned the diner since 1987 and has seen some of Washington's biggest. "I met every single [2008 presidential] candidate except McCain," says Sheehan.

During the 2008 presidential election, Barack Obama stopped by for a bite and photo op. That's a swift move. New Hampshire hosts the first primary of the race, and for a few weeks it's in the spotlight. By proxy, so is the Red Arrow.

Slick and lean in architectural design, the Red Arrow visited today is an original; no Golden Corral-sized upgrades, no way. First opened in 1922, the diner has boasted dishes like special-recipe American chop suey and shepherd's pie—meals that have even halted the hearty Food Network host Guy Fieri mid-chew. Considering its location—in a college town, chock full of Olive Garden-eating students—and its semi-regulars—the (Adam) Sandler family, for instance—maintaining its true-blue historical integrity is no easy feat. The diner offers blue plate specials literally served on blue plates. When a kid orders the special, however, the food comes to the table atop a blue frisbee.

Where else could Diane Sawyer roll up her power-suit sleeves and dip a fry in ketchup? Mind you, both French fry and ketchup belonged to a celeb-struck patron with whom she hadn't even shaken hands. The Red Arrow is that kind of place. An amalgam of folks—from the dailies (some three times a day-dailies) to the yearlies (Adam Sandler stops by when he ventures back to hometown Manchester)—that all come for



something familiar, for something unobtrusive. For something real.

"The diner is the focal point of the community," says Sheehan. "What better place than a diner for a politician to come and listen to the views of all different walks of life?"

New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson loves Red Arrow bacon. Diane Sawyer often puts in her order for homemade Dinah Fingers (Twinkies, Red Arrow-style) all the way from D.C. And what's the diner's best selling meal? Yep, it's the Stan the Man, a dish of bacon and eggs, which per Adam Sandler's request is named in honor of his dad.

Sure, the Red Arrow serves up an opportunity for a well-photographed meet and greet. But, like its neon sign, the diner emanates something unassuming. Even the smoothest bigwig can't deny that. ♥

Red Arrow Diner • 61 Lowell Street • Manchester, New Hampshire 03101 • (603) 626-1118 • manchester.redarrowdiner.com • Photographs courtesy Dawn Foote.

