

Ray's Sandwich Shop

Some walk-in closets were larger.
Ray and his wife laid the prepared sandwiches

across the blue Formica counter.
Bologna, salami and provolone, ham salad

on wheat or white —
and the real charm of having them all wrapped

in waxed paper,
with the prices marked with a sharpie: 95 cents

to \$1.95, which was how much my favorite
cost, tuna salad with Swiss. Add a bag of chips

and an orange soda, and lunch was under \$3.00.
Winter days they would have homemade chili

or chicken noodle soup steaming in a vat
on a large hot plate. Every morning they had

coffee, light and sweet; tea with lemon; fresh
pastries: New York-style, both cheese and fruit.

They were always aproned and busy —
the windows often steamed with bodies pressed

close. They were not only short, but
they were small, and Ray would flip up the end

of the counter,
dash to the cooler through the waiting crowd;

dart back again, fill another order, make change;
and he would flash that broad Phil Silvers grin.

They put their daughters through college
and fed a generation of students and the faculty,

filing in and out in their pea coats and tweeds.
Two thirds of my life gone past,

but I remember often standing beside Sigourney
Weaver, who would have walked across

the street from the Art & Architecture building,
where she would be among the tallest

in line, attired in her black leather jacket;
and, on occasion, Meryl Streep, as luminous as

a Botticelli, blonde
tresses flying, having just stepped offstage from

rehearsal at
the Rep, directly opposite Ray's Sandwich shop.

—Wally Swist, [*Candling the Eggs*](#)



Lindy's Diner, Keene, New Hampshire

Mill Pond Diner, Wareham, Massachusetts

