

F Street Diner gives feel of grandmother's kitchen

By Jennifer Johnson
Staff Reporter

Diners. Doesn't everybody love a good greasy spoon?

Eating at F Street Diner, 900 S. 13th St., made me realize why people like to eat at diners.

Diners offer comfort and comfort foods — medicine for the insecure or those longing for home.

Walking into F Street is like walking into a grandma's kitchen. There's an antique-green early 1900s stove that has condiments, syrups, peanut butter, crackers and newspapers piled all over it. I expected to see a cat lying on one of the burners and someone's shoes kicked off in the corner.

The atmosphere is rustic (except for the rock music coming from the kitchen). Saws, pots and pans and pictures of unknown Victorian beauties hang on the walls. And in the spirit of a true "home," hand-made Halloween tissue-ghosts hang in the window.

I went to eat at F Street on a Sunday night and I'll admit that I was a little leery because there was only one other person there. But as the professional food critic that I am not, I didn't let that bother me.

I went ahead and ordered — no easy task — there were no menus but a huge wall sign with tons of items to choose from. Then came that ever-famous Denny's/Perkins decision, "Do I want breakfast or dinner?" because just like its com-

mercialized counterparts, breakfast is available all day.

I decided on the hot turkey sandwich (\$4.49) with the hopes that the mashed potatoes were real, because I realized that I may not have the time to peel a real potato before 1992. My dining companion, hungry little bugger that he was, answered the breakfast/dinner question by ordering both — a patty melt with fries (a special at \$3.49) and a half-order of biscuits and gravy (\$1.85).

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Our food was good, and yes, the potatoes were real with lumps and everything. The gravy on my plate was that gelatinous bright yellowish kind that is served in high schools everywhere, but it was good. The patty melt and fries were a little greasy, but whoever can figure out how to fry these foods without grease either deserves to win a Pulitzer or knock Florence Henderson with her Wesson Oil right off of television.

We didn't have desert, but there

were several pies from a Kansas City bakery to choose from — \$1.49 a slice or \$1.99 a-la-mode. Now I was a little confused at this point because in the front window there is a neon ice cream cone that reads "Ice Cream" below it, but the only ice cream they sell is vanilla.

At F Street, you order your own food; there are no waitresses to wait and wait on like at some other popular diners, and no 20-minute wait for some crackers or jelly while your food gets cold.

It's a pretty simple place aimed at self service — which is appealing. After all, who doesn't get tired of servers coming to the table 50 times, every time (strategically calculated by the waiter or waitress) while your mouth is full so that extra glass of water is totally out of the question?

The prices are pretty good. There are daily specials for \$4.49 such as creamed chicken on biscuits, Cajun meatloaf, salisbury steak and other homey favorites. The portions are large and include potatoes, a vegetable and a roll. Not a bad price for a meal that even mom would consider truly "square."

F Street is a place where you can go alone and keep to yourself just fine. No one will bother you while you eat and you can read the newspaper, study or just sit back and pretend you're at someone's house. Please don't leave your shoes in the corner though. It's a homey place, but they're still required.

Drake confirms reality We are OK, now that he has arrived

It's a little tougher now. I never know when they'll come. I might be out on the street or sitting in the community tub, doing nothing and minding my own.

Sometimes they'll wake me up or maybe keep me from falling asleep. I've tried to make them come, but they are on their own.

Images mostly, or sometimes bits of conversations. Fear is the worst. I've got their tension, but no way out.

There are different people, maybe eight or 12. I don't know whether they know if I'm here or not, or whether they're calling out to me or anyone at all.

"Your father is worried about you."

I probably shouldn't have told him. I thought he might be able to help, get me something.

"Your father has no authority for prescriptions, regardless of what might be stashed in his desk. A man that far up gets many privileges. I am not certain, but I doubt any psychoactives will help you."

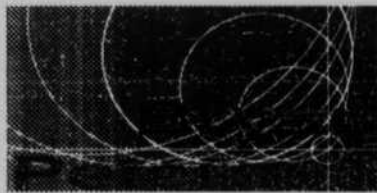
You must know I fit about 19 kinds of crazy.

"Hearing voices, seeing images, we all do a little of this. Yet you have reported phenomena of such magnitude and persistence . . . in other circumstances I would be concerned. Here, though, we sus-

pect something else. Especially considering your observation period."

(I chuckle to myself upon hearing that phrase.) The whole company knows about this?

"Only a few, your father and the



21C team."

Is it me or not?

"I don't believe so. That's the best I can offer at the moment."

What are we talking? Implants? Synthetic hallucinogen? Telekinetic?

"Telepathic. We can rule nothing out at this point."

Why now, why me?

"21C did not pick you up by accident. Did to test something new on you is too much, too risky. They know your father."

Like I said, the fear is bad, but sometimes they'll give me something nice — resting under a tree or reading under a pile of blankets with a mug of coffee. The real stuff, not the synthcaff.

The worst problem is I don't

know when or where they'll come. I've tried reaching out myself but get nothing. If I keep trying, concentrate harder, maybe I'll get through.

It would help if I could reach someone. I've tried numbers, names, sentences, everything. I'm starting to wonder about myself, no matter what my psycho program says. I mean, they've got to be out there.

Greenish-yellow leaves rustling, savoring their final days suspended above the ground. A branch bobbing up and down like a pump handle. Moving up the branch toward the gnarled trunk. There, behind those leaves. His tail thrashing about making squirrel talk.

He keeps picking something up and putting it to his face. Then he stops, motionless, and springs three feet vertically, limbs splayed in every direction. He circles a branch and vanishes.

YES, YES I'M HERE.

Who?

Drake, I'm Drake. We got through. You saw the squirrel, the old tree.

We're OK then, not crazy.

All right, all right, let's figure this shit out.

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Papa

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adequate for the average appetite. Papa John's is not one of those watercress sandwich, tea-room places where you buy a sandwich, then wonder what happened to the rest of the meal.

If you're not in the mood for a sandwich, the Papa John's special Greek salad is a meal itself and the homemade soup is not to be missed. If your palate (or stomach) can't handle the peppers, feta cheese or other ingredients,

the employees will omit them. Papa John's pricing is simple: all dinners are \$5.99, sandwiches are \$2.99, homemade soup and salad bar is \$3.59 and the Greek salad is \$4.99.

Besides the above, Papa John's serves desserts, imported and domestic beer and wine and non-alcoholic beverages.

The restaurant is located at 114 S. 14th St., and opens at 7 a.m. daily for breakfast. Sunday through Thursday, Papa John's closes at 8 p.m. and Friday and Saturday at 10 p.m.



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daVini's gives full portioning for each add on whether you get two items or ten. FRI. SPECIAL MINI 2-ITEM PIZZAS \$1.99

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