

[the union's leader]

# Storming New Hampshire

Candidates crowd the Granite State, hoping to win big in the nation's first primary.

By Michael Brendan Dougherty

OUTSIDE THE RADISSON HOTEL in Manchester, a riot is breaking out. Huge “Hillary” signs barricade half of Elm Street. High-pitched cheers pierce the cold New Hampshire air. Hailing from Mrs. Clinton’s alma mater, Wellesley Students for Clinton had been bused in to greet her husband and the assembled media. Almost all of the Hillary volunteers, staff, and supporters are studious women, occasionally accompanied by young men who aver, “I’m just the boyfriend.” Most have volunteered for previous Hillary events and will come back to the state for more. One young woman in a black turtleneck explains to another, “New Hampshire is everything.”

She’s right. The Granite State’s first-in-the-nation status began in 1920, but took on its unusual importance in 1952, when Dwight Eisenhower defeated Robert Taft for the Republican nomination and Estes Kefauver ended Harry Truman’s bid for a second term. The winner of the primary usually wins the party’s nomination—with some recent exceptions. In 1992, Paul Tsongas narrowly defeated Bill Clinton, whose strong second-place finish earned him the “comeback kid” moniker and set him on the path to the presidency. In 1996, Pat Buchanan beat Bob Dole, and in 2000, John McCain outdrew George W. Bush, due in part to

New Hampshire’s growing plurality of voters registered as Independents.

Some have speculated that the recently tightened and frontloaded primary calendar makes New Hampshire less important. Rudy Giuliani’s campaign told the media this summer that they could practically skip Iowa and New Hampshire and still steamroll the competition in Florida and on the new “Tsunami Tuesday.” But his recent ad buys and frequent visits to the state tell a different story. Every top-tier candidate or a high-level surrogate has a scheduled trip to New Hampshire at least every ten days until the Jan. 8 primary.

Inside the hotel ballroom, Gray Chynoweth, a Manchester lawyer and head of the state’s Young Democrats, warms up the crowd with typical New Hampshire primary patter: “The weather is getting cold, but the politics are just heating up.” Chynoweth explains that his state is home to “the underfunded, the underdogs, and, of course, the comeback kids.” But that’s where his love for the little guy apparently ends. In the practiced rhythm of the young and ambitious, Chynoweth reminds his audience that, as head of the Young Democrats, he “must remain officially neutral. And therefore...” he pauses, “I’m resigning as of Monday to work for Hillary Clinton.” Chynoweth

will serve on Hillary’s National LGBT Steering Committee. The Wellesley girls go wild.

Events where Hillary appears are tightly managed. The music is pumped in from campaign headquarters, no doubt reflecting her preference for centralized planning. But while Hillary stalks through Iowa’s fields to chirpy K.T. Tunstall tunes, Bill improvises in Manchester. As he chats with kitchen staffers, the latest Kanye West single blasts appropriately egomaniacal lyrics, “You should be honored by my lateness / that I would even show up to this fake s--t ... / There’s a thousand of you / there’s only one of me.”

His speech is wonky, empathetic, and delivered without a prepared text. He outlines three problems—inequality, instability, and unsustainability—that should drive the Democratic agenda. He explains Hillary’s advantage over the Republicans in words stolen from the mouths of conservatives: “You cannot be an ideological party in a dynamic world where you need to think.” And while the problems Clinton outlines are global in scope, his proposed solutions strike a nationalist chord: “If we mandate that every roof be greened, you cannot outsource that job to India. You need someone here to green a roof.” On trade, he speaks about lost economic

sovereignty, filching an analogy from Hillary's campaign book: "People ask why we don't enforce our trade laws on India or China. I ask them if they think they could go down to the bank, punch the banker in the face, and still get a loan." The former president has been used sparingly in his wife's campaign, but his presence still electrifies any Democratic crowd. One councilman from New York admits that Hillary "never could turn a room on like this." We can also be sure that Hillary's campaign would never knowingly allow Bill to shake hands with 20-year-old girls while Justin Timberlake sings, "I'm Bringing Sexy Back."

Polls show Hillary up 13 points in the Granite State, but her victory no longer seems like a foregone conclusion. Her small lead in Iowa has disappeared, and her New Hampshire numbers are slipping. Retail politics allow her opponents to counterpunch effectively.

The day after Bill's address in Manchester, Elizabeth Edwards attended a house party in Franconia. About a hundred local Democrats gathered around delicate finger foods while the hostess, Claudia Chase, beamed. Her husband dodged all political questions, ducking in and out of side rooms to fetch chairs, telling guests and reporters alike, "I'm just the husband." Mrs. Edwards asked whether people had heard Clinton's banker analogy in reference to China and India. Many nodded. Elizabeth gently proceeded, "Which candidate, on either side, has received more money from defense contractors? Hillary Clinton. Which candidate has received more money from Big Pharma than any candidate?" Audience members began filling in the blanks. "If you are going to fight them, you can't be in debt to them," Elizabeth explained.

Her make-up and personality are bright, and she commands the room—not with her husband's sympathetic

charisma but with the infectious energy of a supermom. These qualities seem to sharpen her attacks on other candidates. Without breaking her smile, she dismisses Obama as easily as she did Clinton: "You can't just talk about change or hope. You have to do things." Elizabeth outlines how her husband raised all the money for a College for Everyone pilot program in Greene County, North Carolina.

A cynic would say that she makes an ideal attack dog because her well-documented struggle with breast cancer makes it impossible to hit back. That same cynic would also conclude that Edwards's efforts in Greene County are meant to pad a thin political resume. But Mrs. Edwards seems so accessible that all doubt melts. After recounting a story of a woman who whispered into John Edwards's ear at a campaign stop in Iowa about her inability to pay for healthcare, Elizabeth condenses her husband's appeal to one question: "If you had to go and whisper your problems in one candidate's ear, who would you choose?"

Being an early primary state means that New Hampshire is blessed with an influx of out-of-state helpers and long-term activists. In the back of the room, a curly-haired young woman named Charity helps people sign up to be Edwards volunteers. She drove up from Princeton, New Jersey to help organize events and work the campaign phone banks. "This is the first time I've done something like this," she explains. "I read Elizabeth's book, and it felt like she was my friend." While Charity has seen Elizabeth at several stops, she has never seen the candidate himself. She doesn't need to. For her, politics is a mission and she is a pilgrim.

Standing next to her, Jinnel Robinson typifies the other creature of New Hampshire politics: the issue activist. Wearing a purple t-shirt that says, "I'm a

Health Care voter," Robinson is chasing each candidate who comes into her area, signing up their audience members for e-mail blasts from the New Hampshire SEIU and attempting to get digital photographs of herself with the contenders—with her shirt prominently in view. On an "off day," Jinnel still drives nearly 100 miles and attends several events. For her, politics is a job, and she is a prole. Supporting a candidate is a temporary adventure that ends in a final decision—defeat or victory—putting a volunteer out of her misery quickly or rewarding her work. Supporting a cause is usually a thankless task that ends in a dissatisfying compromise. In New Hampshire, you can distinguish issue activists by the blank stare they throw at a candidate or a surrogate—no affection, no fear, just the contempt a worker has for an unreliable but necessary tool.

Later that week, Barack Obama, making his 20th visit to the state, arrives in Manchester for a policy address on public education, given in the small auditorium of Central High School. His staff is riding high: the previous night the campaign sent out a text message to supporters announcing that Obama had surpassed Clinton in Iowa state polls. In New Hampshire, he still trailed by double digits, but was on the rise. His new strategy of attacking Clinton was yielding results, and Obama has reason to hope. Roughly half of New Hampshire residents—despite hundreds of visits by the candidates—have not yet decided which one they support. With just over a month to play, Obama is hitting his stride and aims to convince voters that Hillary is not inevitable. Armed with new polls showing her lead over Republicans nationwide evaporating and a promised campaign tour by Oprah, he has all he needs to pull an upset.

Obama has been credited with giving great stump speeches. More should be said about his skill at retail politics.

Gabrielle Grossman, a resident of Exeter, describes herself as an “Obama groupie.” Her ready smile doesn’t betray the difficulties she faces raising a child with autism. She has been to a few Obama events in the state and was introduced to the Illinois senator. Today, he recognizes her in the crowd, remembers her name, and asks about her son. Grossman is not among the 50 percent who could change their votes. In a mass democracy of over 300 million people, Barack Obama, a potential president, knows Gabrielle Grossman from Exeter by name. The effect on her is just short of a religious experience.

But for all his prowess on the stump and in face-to-face encounters, Obama has a little trouble delivering his policy address. He relies on a teleprompter, and his delivery straddles the line between thoughtful and sleep-inducing. Speaking about poor black and Latino students, he chastises the state and federal governments that have allowed some school buildings in North Carolina to remain unimproved since the 19th century. Then suddenly he makes a connection between crime and education that was absent from the prepared speech and raises his voice, improvising, “When the prisons are newer than the schools...” He pauses, seemingly surprised by his own anger, and returns awkwardly to his speech: “Is it any wonder ... they don’t think their education is important?”

The Republican race is even more fluid. In the first three contests, six candidates stand to make a difference. In the top tier are Mitt Romney, Rudy Giuliani, and the resurgent John McCain. But in Iowa, Mike Huckabee is threatening to overtake them all. In New Hampshire, Ron Paul’s support is nearing double digits in the polls, but seems to be even stronger as measured by the frequency one encounters his supporters on the ground. In South Carolina, Fred

Thompson has the advantage of regional solidarity.

McCain has traversed the state for over 40 days in this primary season, holding dozens of town-hall meetings and relying on the groundwork he laid in 2000. He currently sits 16 points behind frontrunner Romney and is engaged in a fight for second place with Giuliani. He has to rely on legwork, as Romney and Rudy are each buying over a million dollars worth of television ads per week.

In his town-hall format, McCain brings friends like Congressman and fellow Arizonan Jeff Flake and Utah Gov. Jon Huntsman. He jokes acidly about Washington’s dysfunction and introduces his answers with the trademark “I’ve got to give you a little straight talk on this.” In a recent *New York Times* column, David Brooks talked up McCain as the “only great man” running for the presidency. It is probably true—his war service, his time in a P.O.W. camp, his pluck and self-awareness testify to great character. But great men can labor under illusions. McCain repeats over and over that Republicans lost the 2006 elections not because of the unpopularity of the Iraq War but because they lacked fiscal discipline. In New London, McCain’s pledge not to raise taxes is met with lusty applause, but his paeans to budgetary restraint get only polite nods. No one believes him.

Oddly, New Hampshire residents comply with the stagecraft that top-tier campaigns create. McCain scheduled a stop at Jack’s Diner—New London’s claim to fame—before his town hall. Half an hour before he arrived, dozens of residents purchased their coffee and expensive croissant sandwiches and posed as normal customers, while McCain’s advance men stood around the room like sentinels. The senator entered, jerked his aging body around

the joint for a few minutes, and got his photo-op. Fewer than half of the customers/extras intend to vote for him, but none needed direction in his assigned role: Granite Stater caught eating by war hero.

At the town-hall meeting an hour later, one man rises to ask sheepishly, “What would you do about the 12 million or more illegal immigrants?” McCain turns to the makeshift grandstand behind him: “Ladies and gentleman, this meeting is adjourned,” he gargles self-deprecatingly. After explaining that the demise of his comprehensive immigration reform proposal taught him a lesson, he reiterates his support for a comprehensive approach, briefly acknowledges that the American people want border security, then repeats, “I got the message” three times. Remarkably no one stands up and asks, “Why the hell should we believe you? We defeated that thing in 2006, and then you tried it again in 2007, you sonofabitch!” That grumbling is done privately as McCain exits to dutiful applause. New Londoners played their part perfectly.

Some primary voters cast themselves in several acts of a show. At a town hall in Nashua, attorney Richard Florino asks Rudy Giuliani, “What makes liberal Democrats so wrong about the threats this country faces?” He is not a Giuliani campaign plant; he just asks questions as if he is one. The next day at a house party, Florino is called on first again. This time he asks the former mayor to discuss Romney’s failure to live up to Ronald Reagan’s economic record.

Beyond the enthusiastic support of Florino, Giuliani has trouble attracting a crowd. At his first stop in Manchester, Ron Paul and Dennis Kucinich supporters threaten to overwhelm his small following. His weak position in New Hampshire has caused him to change his strategy and attack the frontrunner, Mitt

Romney. "I lead my closest rival in tax-cuts 23-0," he harrumphs in Nashua. Later, in an interview with *The Politico*, he announces that it is time "to take the mask off and take a look at what kind of governor was he."

Giuliani advertises that his candidacy will change what it means to be a Republican. In Nashua, he explains, "People become Republicans because they want low taxes, fiscal discipline, and a strong national defense." There is no mention of the social issues that helped attract millions to the GOP when Democrats

porters belatedly get word that their man, his wife Ann, and some of the grandkids have arrived on the opposite end of Main Street and hustle to meet him. For once in this campaign, Giuliani's take no-prisoners style has foiled Romney's flawless operation.

Romney's campaign is slick, but his support seems shallow. In Iowa, over two thirds who poll in his favor admit that they may change their minds. This uncertainty has fueled Huckabee's rise and threatens to undermine all the work and money Romney has invested in his

tremendous power over the rest of the nation?

Granite Staters take their privilege seriously. Most are too busy to learn the ins and outs of each candidate's policies, though they have a general idea. The voters can easily discern the professionalism of each campaign and have a record of sending the rest of the nation candidates that aren't too embarrassing. (They didn't vote for Dole, remember.) So each national campaign attempts to boil down its candidacy to one personal question. In one instance, it's Governor Huntsman asking on behalf of John McCain, "Whatever your differences on this or that policy, who has the character to lead this nation?" In another, it's Elizabeth Edwards tenderly inquiring, "If you could just whisper your problems into the ear of one candidate, which would you chose?" Gabrielle Grossman, the mother of a special-needs child, asks herself, "Which candidate knows me? Knows about people like me and my son?"

A man from Windham, Chris Sweeney, approaches Romney. He wants a candidate who will bring back the high-paying jobs New Hampshire seems to be losing. He explains to me that he is tired "of everybody being offended by everything. Isn't this a democracy? Can't the majority sometimes have its way?" He also wants someone who will police the southern border. Siding up to the surrounded candidate, Sweeney quietly utters one stoic plea: "Please, help us take back our country."

Holding his granddaughter in one arm and shaking the hand of another supporter, Romney doesn't blink or make eye contact. He just says, "That's what we're tryin' to do," and smiles with his starched white teeth. Sweeney shrugs. He has six weeks to figure out who will restore the places and certainties he once relied on. ■

## WHAT IS IT THAT MAKES CITIZENS OF THE REPUBLIC WANT TO **SEE THEIR FUTURE COMMANDER IN CHIEF BAG GROCERIES** IN CONCORD OR **EAT CLAM CHOWDER** IN NORTH CONWAY?

embraced amnesty, acid and abortion. Giuliani promises "to stay on the offense" both in what he calls "The Terrorists' War on Us" and by advocating pro-growth policies for the American economy. His tough-guy persona has attracted a certain type of nationalist Republican voter. In the back of the room, Tex, a Bush supporter in 2000, admires him from a distance: "Giuliani has balls, and right now, that's important."

The clash between the Romney and Giuliani campaigns threatened to spill into the streets of Nashua. In honor of its annual Holiday Stoll, the city's main street was closed to cars and both campaigns scheduled a walk within 15 minutes of each other. Beginning on the north end of Main Street, Rudy and his entourage barrels through, stopping for the mayor to get a slice of "Sopranos' New York Style Pizza."

Meanwhile, Romney's supporters muster on the south end, awaiting the arrival of their candidate. Suddenly, Giuliani's busses pull up and block Romney's planned entrance. Mitt sup-

early state strategy. He has bet on Iowa, New Hampshire, and Michigan to rocket him past Giuliani in the national polls before the Feb. 5 Super Tuesday. If Romney wins in squeakers, the media will prepare the way for Giuliani or another candidate to surpass him. But Romney's state director is optimistic, believing that the "party of family values" won't fail to distinguish between Romney and his opponents. Strolling through Nashua, even rival campaign supporters comment on how "wholesome" Romney's campaign looked compared to Rudy's aggressive sprint through town.

To an outsider, the New Hampshire primary seems like an insane process for choosing the man or woman who will lead the free world. What is it that makes citizens of the Republic want to see their future commander in chief bag groceries in Concord or eat clam chowder in North Conway? Why should a state of just over a million mostly white affluent folks in corduroy and jewel-colored sweaters wield such

[cuba libre]

# Castro's Enabler

It's Soviet sponsor long gone, Cuba is short on communists but stunted by poverty. Is it time to end the embargo?

By Fred Reed

ON HAVANA'S MALECÓN, the seawall that parallels the shore, the waves roll in and hit the sudden obstacle, sending towering explosions of bright white spray far into the air, occasionally soaking the unwary pedestrian. Across the highway that follows the malecón is a cheap open-air restaurant, the DiMar. A steady breeze from the sea pours across the tables. A tolerable shrimp cocktail, topped with mayonnaise, costs a few bucks. On a couple of evenings, I drank a beer there, watching Cuba go by. It wasn't what I had expected.

Unlike many gringo tourists, I was legal, having gotten a license from the Treasury Department. Without one, travel to Cuba is illegal under the Trading with the Enemy Act of 1917. Why Cuba was my enemy wasn't clear to me. Nor was it to the Cubans.

I had inadvertently neglected to tell the authorities that I was a journalist—I hate it when that happens—so I was not in a position to ask probing questions of officials. But then I didn't want official twaddle. I wanted to wander, take cabs down the coast, just look at things. And I did.

I was pleased to find the old part of Havana both charming and reasonably well preserved, especially around the Convent of San Francisco. It is, of course, a museum now, as God knows

we mustn't be religious, but it is in good shape and breathes a moody solemnity. I tried to imagine the stillness in times before the motorcycle. The narrow lanes around it were closed to cars, making it pleasant to walk among the shops.

The country is poor, run down, and itself almost a museum. Sitting in the DiMar is like visiting the Fifties. The American embargo makes it hard to get new cars, so many Cubans still drive models from 1959, the year of the revolution, and before. Some sport jazzy paint jobs, and others don't. It was remarkable to watch the rides of my adolescence go by, charting them mentally as one did in 1964—'54 Merc, '57 Caddy, '56 Chevy. Around me the other customers, downscale Cubans in all shades of nonwhite, laughed and chatted.

They are an accommodating people. On my arrival, they spoke a truncated Spanish hard to understand—*Cómo etáh uteh? Ma o menoh.*—but they made an intense national effort to improve their clarity, and by my fourth day, they were comprehensible.

Cuba doesn't fit its sordid image. It is most assuredly a dictatorship, yet the police presence is much less than that of Washington, and such cops as I saw had no interest in me. It is not regimented.

Havana does not feel oppressed, as Moscow did during the days of the Soviet Union. Mao's China it isn't.

The island certainly isn't dangerous to anyone. Somebody said that the only communists remaining in the world are in Cuba, North Korea, and the Harvard faculty lounge. I do not know whether Harvard's professoriate thirsts for godless world hegemony, though the idea is not implausible, but it is absurd to put North Korea and Cuba in the same category. Pyongyang has, or wants, nuclear arms, and has both a huge army aimed at South Korea and a habit of testing long-range ballistic missiles. Cuba has little military and no one to use it against; from an American point of view, the Cuban armed forces are about as terrifying as George Will with a water pistol. It has no nuclear arms and no signs of wanting any. It is not a rogue state. It is a bedraggled island of pleasant people who need money.

Cuba is expensive. Figuring the prices of things is difficult—deliberately so, one might suspect—because of a peculiar game that the government plays with currencies. Cuba has two, the national currency, which a visitor almost never sees, and the CUC (pronounced "kook"), which appears to exist to impoverish tourists. If you change dollars, the government skims