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 I was filling up the car the other day, and I had one of those moments of clarity. It was a brief flashback to my childhood. Admittedly, the gas station is not a common place to trigger memories, but in some ways, it was very appropriate and telling.

One thing that suddenly stood out in my mind was how so much of life has changed - even simple things like gas stations. Do you remember full service gas stations? When I was a child, my parents and I did a lot of travel by car. We had many long driving trips - to Florida, the deep south, and to countless [Watkins Glen](http://www.theglen.com/) auto races in the summertime. A fine example was all the times we drove through upstate New York on the way to Watkins Glen and the [Finger Lakes](http://www.fingerlakes.org/). I can remember stopping at the gas station ... at times, they were called "service stations" - and an attendant would spring into action, walking up to the driver's side, asking my father what gas he would like and if he wanted him to check under the hood. It was the de-facto standard of summertime driving trips for us, and we certainly drove through our share of "Smalltown, USA" on our travels "off the beaten path".

Funny how these things are so vivid in my mind.

What amazes me now ... is how so much of this has progressed (or perhaps regressed) so much over the years. And the "service station" is but a metaphor for it. Back in the day, you didn't mind making a stop, taking in the quaint locale, meeting some of the locals - and the time issue just wasn't as critical as it is now. It was almost more "zen-like" - little did we know it then.

Now, everything is built around convenience. Food is made to be "fast". Everything is built around "getting more done, faster". It's all about checking items off your lifetime "to-do" list. You train for a marathon to scratch it off your list - then never run again. You strive for your million dollars and 15 minutes of fame - then have no energy left to explore the world and all its beauty.

It is now simply easier to get out of the car and get the gas yourself. Has it evolved into a lack of trust of the guy that was doing the filling? Or are we just "beyond Zen" - and not in a good way?

Funny how so many of these things in life have gone the way of full service - sometimes for good, sometimes for bad.

I sure do miss those trips to 'the Glen' ...

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