

Fuel Stops from Yesteryear

Anyone remember what people used to call places where you got gasoline for your car?

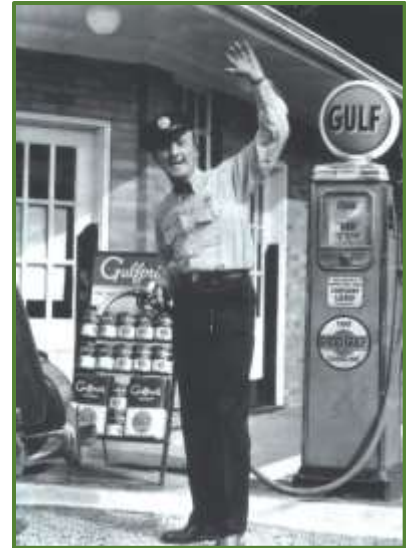
They weren't called *gas stations* or *fueling centers*, but *service stations*.

One of my very first jobs as a teenager (back in the 1950s) was to work part-time at such a place during school months and full-time in the summer. It helped me save money for college.

What was it like then? When you pulled in, someone (sometimes even more than one) raced out to greet you, ask what you needed, and proceeded to fill your gas tank.

While you sat warmly in your car, the service station attendant washed your windows, checked your wiper blades, the oil, and your tire pressure. After filling up the gas tank, they took your payment, wished you well, and waved as you drove away.

The owner, Clarence Wilson, who became a lifelong friend, insisted on the highest of customer service at his station, and the motoring public responded by bringing their business to him.



Service stations also would hand out gifts after so many gallons of gas had been purchased (unbelievable, right?). My guess is that many of our residents in Life Care and Century Park, and some younger generations, grew up drinking from juice glasses provided by Sinclair (the station where I worked), Shell or Texaco instead of Steuben or Tiffany.

What is the first thing that comes to mind today when someone asks if you ever were “in the service?”

There are two primary meanings of that phrase. The first is military service – the service given by all those men and women who served and are serving to defend and protect our country. That's why George Washington asked for no pay for serving as commander-in-chief of the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. He looked at what he was doing as a service to his country. Neither did he submit expenses for reimbursement, which when added up amounted to nearly 10 times what his salary would have been.

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Before taking office as president, he again offered to serve without pay if all his expenses were covered. This time, Congress courteously declined, and he was paid.

The second association of being “in the service” is laid bare in the hit television series *Downton Abbey*, about an aristocratic family and their domestic servants in British social hierarchy. What did it mean in the early 20th century to be “in the service?”



Of course, it meant being a servant to others. It meant a life lived in service to others – whether that service was being a butler, a governess, a cook, a maid, a footman, or a working, serving part of a larger whole, and probably not receiving a whole lot of accolades for doing what you’re doing.

Service has always been part and parcel of being “in the service.”

Customer service is the foundational block of what we are called to do in Life Care and Century Park. No matter what our jobs may be, we are “in the service.”

And that’s what Clarence Wilson demanded at his service station. Of me, and anyone else who worked there.

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace (1 Peter 4:10 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter