

A car is a machine which burns fuel to propel itself. The internal combustion engine is the powerhouse of the machine, performing the literal burning of the aforementioned fuel... a sustained, cyclical reaction, resultant in the linear actuation of several pistons – at least, in typical designs. This reciprocal process is then translated, mechanically, into a rotational process, which is transferred to wheels, nominally two to four of them, which causes the carriage holding both the engine and all drive train components forwards. An astute observer may have deduced something about this arrangement, though, that being the efficiency of the machine. Efficiency can be tricky! In this scenario, the concept of efficiency thus refers to the amount of chemical energy stored in the fuel that maintains its existence as it is transferred to mechanical energy, which then drives the car. In the year 1824, Nicolas Léonard Sadi Carnot developed a model for a basic heat engine. This model, thereafter referred to as a Carnot engine, is the highest efficiency heat engine that is theoretically achievable in our reality. The model even directly led to the development of the thermodynamic concept of entropy, when it was studied mathematically by Rudolf Clausius in 1865. Entropy, being its own beast besides efficiency, seemed to creep up in all cases where heat engines were deployed. As determined from another perspective, efficiency is nothing more than the measure of

Having known all this, fundamentally, you can imagine my surprise when the mechanic revealed to me that my gas tank was almost completely full.

I was driving down the interstate, I-90 I believe, a toll road at a bargain of no more than four dollars thirty seven cents modern day standard per toll booth. The relatively well maintained pavement was a glorious relief from the pedestrian nightmare the walkable urban scrawl which was developing below. The restrictive, dare I say bordering on a Marxist concept, was a direct occurrence following the further establishment the alien menace Volantran colonizers had achieved earlier this year. At that time, June 10th I believe, the galactic interlopers had won unanimous recognition of citizenship by all of the United Nations of Earth (Retroactively renamed to further suit the ideal of extra-terrestrial life’s confirmed existence.)

Well, to the point then. It was a lovely drive when I noticed the fuel gauge on my car, (a vintage model, some foreign brand though of excellent build quality, and properly maintained to boot.) The gauge had read full just three days prior, maybe four, but since then I had engaged in well over a few hundred miles of good old American driving, so the shock I felt when I noticed the gauge still read “full” was, in my opinion, completely warranted.

The mechanic – a Hispanic fellow, perhaps Mexican, but very clean and well-spoken in English – his words had struck a chord in me, something strange...

“The fuel tank is pretty much full. You sure you didn’t fill it up earlier maybe and forgot about it?”

Now, I knew I hadn’t filled the car up earlier. Only hours ago, I was actually engaged in a rather heated debate with members of the board of directors of the Family Taft Corporation’s Natural Reserves and Fracking division. Before that, I would have had no time to fill the car up, either – a separate, private meeting ran somewhat late seeing as the only attending staff was the organized, lovely, and double-barreled maiden named Carol Seath-Houston and I, engaging in a (one time only!) partial side property of a dashing strict affair. Similarly, the two days prior, (recalling that, the last time I filled the car up was three days ago, including the day during which I write,) I was entirely busy during almost every waking hour I recalled.

Therefore, following a rigorous and solid logic, the only sound explanation was this: somehow, the engine within my car was burning fuel at a greater efficiency than previously thought possible, and entropy seemed wholly uninvolved.

To the individual who might question why I’ve written this small-scoped draft of a memoir, I offer the following explanation: I’m a man of records. I find it easy, and worthwhile beyond measure, to create and maintain transcripts of the day-to-day. Being the Chief Executive Officer of the proudly American conglomerate Taft-PepsiCo, It remains critically important that I am able to assemble a linear record of what I do, what happens to me, and further inclinations towards the progression of the company mission.

Now, regarding the shop; that being the mechanic’s shop, more frequently allured to as a car shop, the one within which the most spectacular (and expensive) vehicle, the holder of the single highest possibility for appreciation in value among those in my current collection, was at the time being investigated... A large enclosed space, with a ventilation unit looming centerfold of an otherwise barren and strut-laden corrugated metal roof (aluminum?), to each far end of the place were two car lifts, both occupied, leftward from the entrance of the one of two large garage doors, but to the right of the car lift was my vehicle, sheen of beautiful (and long discontinued) deep green gloss finish shimmering to me. I was seated on a rather dilapidated office chair, opposed by the mechanic, standing yet still approximately the height I currently claimed sitting.

really nothing for me to fix on this car... But, well if you want an oil change or something we can do that here.”

I waived the man away, possibly I requested an oil change, the fully synthetic old world standard 5W-30 I had kept running through her for all the thirty odd years she had been mine. A new-old stock acquirement for a final strike upon the bidding war I first saw her in- relishing on the day is simply a delight. As I was told, she was the only pristine unit remaining within a long crashed cargo container ship, a truly unique spectacle that she had survived so long with not a fleck of rust, amid all that seawater. A one of a kind car, for a one of a kind man... or something poetic like that.

Once the mechanic had gone off, no doubt to search far in the back for the increasingly rare and imminently vintage synthetic motor oil, I mounted the old girl again. No intention of receiving an oil change was present in my mind, nor was there any desire to pay any kind of bill for the wasted time the blind fool of a mechanic took from me that evening. She started with a key turn, a twinkling of dash lights blinked away by the engine running smooth as off the factory floor. Her acceleration always brought a sort of tickle, with luck the mostly ajar garage door led to an unburdened parking lot, which gave way to a decent gap to seize upon the highway on ramp.

Firing on all cylinders, quite literally, she led me out the back way: an old road intersected by an overpass conquering the disused railroad beneath, which then turned right onto the time-tested North Avenue, giving way to Illinois Route 64. Testing the presence of the State Rep plates on my prized six cylinder, I had her speedometer tap-tap-tap the red line, weaving left-right-left between those fellow midday drivers. At such speeds, a man is humbled.

Coming up to an all too familiar intersection, I slowed. She was responsive in braking, too. Having put an easy 15 or so miles on her, I eyed the fuel gauge. It still read “full.” I guided her, gliding to the left turn lane. I wanted to bring her along quite longer, just to prove to myself this was real – imagine the numbers governments would throw at Taft-PepsiCo, at me, just for the chance to study this engine! It was enough to warm my blood, and excitedly, I took 83 to exit onto the Dwight D. Eisenhower Expressway; going west, I got a supreme glance at the true beauty of the road system. What glory, laid down by our forefathers! Truly the rivers of modernity – and to think they below want to simply remove these monuments to progress, these breakers of chains incarnate! For a man to drive anywhere he wants, in a vehicle he owns, what a truly American marvel, what a caveat of true freedom!

Another- what, another fifteen miles? I spotted the clover intersection that jointed 290 and I-90, the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway, and took it eastward towards the Central Chicago Kernel, conglomerate of concrete, Volantran enveloped buildings, and what remains of the once proud asphalt paving this great country’s very structure – one of freedom. Once.

The blur of haste preceded me, no dip of the fuel gauge! Her old stereo system sang to me, and long since the speedometer had capped out. Being within the leftmost lane, I announced by means of her luminous, still genuine artifacts of incandescent high beams that I was well on the way, the few vehicles ahead merged right, likely out of respect. I felt as the arrow of time, absolute, the linear river, I was progression.

Lights twisting out of sight, every curve absorbed into the progression, tendrils rivulet unending. The fearless wail of sirens, Doppler deafened rows of car horns, the mounting roar of the engine were nothing. With nothing else to consider, only acceleration remained.

The visage the iconic skyline encrusted by developing concrete geometry harbored the only sense of loss I’ve ever felt. Falling behind, perhaps lagging by red-shift, tailing county police dissolved.

The unbroken concrete divider to the left was the guide rail as the unmistakable end-of-the-road mark grew, an enormously insurmountable concrete barrier, bearing a metal sign which read:

END OF TOLLWAY: DETOUR
ROUTE AROUND NEW
CHICAGO-VOLANTRAN
CENTER VIA 294-SOUTH

Looking down at the fuel gauge just prior to impact, I noticed that

