

# 36

## THE TIME WARP

**W**hat have I just stepped into?  
I'm at a fairly dumpy looking gas station in south central KY. I stopped in to use the restroom and I got lost... in time.

It's hard to explain, but I'll try.

On my way to the restroom I entered a time warp and then just stopped and looked around. The ceiling tiles were checkered and so was the floor. Pictures, old and new, covered the walls and behind a group of older men, a cute little diner appeared.

A deep breath or two and I start up again... to the restroom.

Moments later I walk back in and just stop and stare. I just took it all in. The smells. The sounds. The lights. The people. The dozen or so tables. The three booths. The atmosphere.

"What can I help you with, honey?" I hear from about twenty feet away. "Oh, probably a lot of things, but right now I'm just taking it all in!" I said.

I didn't plan to stay. In fact, I had no reason to. I had eaten already and I had a large cup of coffee in my truck, but something told me not to leave.

You see, this place is connected to a Shell station, but it's completely disconnected as well. In fact, I'd say it has a life of its own.

The first lady I spoke to would later share with me that she's been here forty-eight years. Her name's Elaine. She's as cute as a button and stands just over five feet tall (with heels on).

She then tells me, "That's nothin', my sister's been here fifty-one years and she'll be here in a half hour. Her name's Patty and she's as cute as me!"

"NO WAY!" I say. "Here? Same place... that long?"

"It's a family business AND we treat everyone like they're family!"

She then talks me into a small coffee and says, "There's free refills, so come on in and stay a while."

As I'm writing this I've been here four hours. I've seen and been a part of many conversations. The regulars are here (I hear they're here six days a week). A lady I met while refilling my coffee says she's been coming here since she was a kid... and she's easily sixty. And I've had several of the staff come and sit with me at my table.

Oh, and Patty came and introduced herself to me. She's the one that's been here fifty-one years. That's a 5 and a 1. She's a spitfire and oh-so-likable as well. I take an interest in her story and all of a sudden she's a firehose I can't turn off.

I hear about the history of this business and how it's been going since 1951 and how, at one point, Patty had nine family members all working here at the same time.

How cool is that?

Then she tells me about a story that's worth telling. So much so that it made the local paper and then the news station some 60 miles away picked it up and ran a story about it.

Check this out.

In December of 2022 a lady came in and asked to have a cake designed for her 50th anniversary. She even had the original cake topper from when they got married. Turns out, Patty is the one who made her original cake and would end up doing this one as well.

That just gave me the chills when I wrote it.

So Patty runs off to get me some copies of the stories that were written and for the next few minutes I lived vicariously through those thoughts. Then I came back to the present and saw just how much those stories left out... so I'll try to fill in the gaps.

This little hole in the wall place will never have the draw of the big boys, and that's a shame, but it has something else.

It has Elaine, Patty, Rebecca, Margaret, Charlotte, Christy, Daniel, and Betty, as well as a plethora of fun, lively ladies that truly enjoy working with each other.

It has conversations, and warmth, and love, and support, and community... and a confidential prayer request box.

It has black folks, white folks, everything in-between folks, rednecks, hillbillies, farmers and business folks, old folks, young folks, and all us middle aged folks.

It has a down home feel in the middle of a city and a culture within its own four walls that'll rival that of any major conglomerate.

It has a true grasp on the lifetime value of a customer that most big companies spend years trying to figure out.

It has a way of treating people like they matter, because to them, they do.

It has a program where it works closely with a local rehab center for women and has employed dozens over the years.

It has what America used to have - people who love each other and a business mindset that cares.

I've truly missed this and am so glad I've found more of "my people."

Oh, and you have to know something else.

This place has terrible signage. From a curb appeal perspective, I never would have stopped if I hadn't had to go to the bathroom. If it was a book, I never would have opened it. If it was a pickup line, I never would have responded.

Yet, here I am... In the middle of a bakery with the best looking donuts and pastries. Inside a diner with incredible smelling sandwiches, burgers, and paninis. Visiting a small business with an award-winning staff.

Is it all they say it is? I can only vouch for today, but what I've witnessed and listened to says they're not just whistling Dixie.

You should come meet my new friends and let them know I sent you. They'll be snarky and witty and helpful and grouchy all at the same time - it feels just like home to me.

Its name is Amon's Sugar Shack. That's a long A and the rest sounds like "mens." It's on the main strip in Somerset, the official car cruise capital of Kentucky.

Amon's used to be called just the Sugar Shack when it was Amon and his wife, Rosemary. His son, Doug, runs it now and he's a pleasure to speak to. He tells me that when people like me accidentally pop in they get hooked. They fall in love with their people and become one of the regulars just like everyone else.

I'm late to the party... but I'm here. What's that? Did you say you're on your way?

Thought so... :)

