

# Grandma was Green: The Sustainable art of Making Do

Brooks, Jr. George B. 2008. **Grandma was Green: The Sustainable art of Making Do.** The Arizona Republic Newspaper; November 14, 2008



Grandma Willie Barnes

**Abstract:** Grandma knew how to make do and survive hard times. Grandma knew how to sustain. Grandma was Green. Sustainability is nothing new and is part of the cultural values of our nation. Most importantly, sustainable is not only a great thing to be, but is also a powerful tool to help reach greater goals including survival.

## Grandma was green. The sustainable art of making do

I heard on the radio that on September 15th, 2008, somebody flipped the switch and turned off Phoenix's economy. Yup, looking at folk's draining 401Ks, it seems that the commentator was correct and I really would like to meet that somebody. In the mean time, I have some decisions to make as to what to do next. Who is going to get my family through this? Who can I turn to? Bush, Obama, Napolitano, Gordon? Nope, they all are too big picture and this problem is personal. However, much to my surprise, it seems Grandma had the answer.

If Grandma was still here she would not like this situation at all. But having seen it all before she would know what to do. You see, Grandma was wise and Grandma had values. She knew how to make do and how to make a way out of no way. Grandma knew that to survive she had to keep her family and community together, healthy, housed and well fed. She knew how to stretch a dollar, plant a garden, reuse, renew, rebuild and how to do more with less. Grandma knew how to sustain. Grandma was green!

Quiet as kept, what we today call green or more properly sustainability is not new. It's part of our cultural values and heritage. To be sustainable is to make and apply environmentally, socially and economically sound decisions. Grandma did not know it but this exactly what she was doing. She was not trying to be green, just take care of her family the best way she knew how. Unknowingly, Grandma had discovered sustainability's greatest secret that it is not just a good thing to be, but also a powerful proactive tool to be used to reach greater goals, like survival.

So there you have it. A paradigm shift like none other. Most importantly I am taking Grandma's advice. In every decision we make from now on we keep Grandma's green values in mind and we are starting to live better and save a lot of money. But what are truly interesting are the business applications. By applying sustainable thinking as a tool within programs like Continuous Quality Improvement and the like, green becomes a valuable asset instead of a costly liability. In fact, as Ed Fox, VP of Sustainability at Arizona Public Service once said to me, being sustainable might indeed improve shareholder value. In these hard times, I think these are lessons well worth learning. Don't you?

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## MY TURN

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**GEORGE  
BROOKS JR.**

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*The writer is an environmental scientist and publisher of "Southwest Green" magazine.*