

## **The Wisdom to Conserve**

by  
**Raymond E. Muth**

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Over the last couple months our family has been privileged to have my wife's grandmother live with us. I say privileged because while a stroke took away some of her short-term memory, her long-term memory is still very sharp and the wisdom of her years is priceless.

It's been interesting because "Gram" can recall very vividly her days growing up not far from where we live now. Most of her stories are fun if not truly amazing. She remembers the day her family first got electricity. And she also remembers where her Dad used to hitch the horses for church which happens to be the same church our family attends today. Ok, so I got the "are you for real look" when I asked if they road in buggies.

But some of the stories are also tough as she can recall the Great Depression and the effect it had on her family and so many around her. And it is very evident that those real life experiences of hardship have left an indelible impression as nothing around her is ever wasted. Every scrap of food left over after eating must go somewhere and I noticed the hole in a shirt I was about to pitch has been clandestinely sewn shut.

It seems so surreal to hear her stories but there was one little story that was a wake-up call for me. When we hit that nasty cold snap in February with snow everywhere, Gram looked out the window one day and said "now this is how I remember winters around here. This is the way it used to be."

Those words rattled around in my hollow little head for awhile. It's one thing to read all that is being said about global warming and our energy consumption. It's something else to hear about it from someone who has lived through our area for 9 decades.

As one who has felt this whole global warming thing has been more hype than reality, lately I'm not so sure. Regardless, I decided it was time for me to take stock of our family's energy consumption and to do our fair share. I began by purchasing those new squiggly fluorescent light bulbs that are supposed to be 4 to 6 times more efficient than the normal incandescent light bulbs we routinely use today. As our bulbs burn out, I am putting them in place. While the advertisement says a 14 watt fluorescent bulb gives off the same light as a 60 watt incandescent bulbs, I don't think that's quite true. But it's not bad. We've grown used to it.

As I was replacing bulbs here & there, I began asking myself, now does this light really have to be on all the time? Of course it doesn't. So I shut it off. Or what about this clock/radio we never use any more. Why is it plugged in keeping time? So I unplugged it and put it away. I looked at our thermostat and decided we'd go down just one degree. And then I gazed over at my aquarium light. Hmmm... it's beautiful but there are many

hours in a day where that light is unnecessary so it now gets shut off.

Ok so I have a gas hog in the driveway. What can I do there? I decided we'd do our best to combine our trips to the store. And that little garden I used to plant every year. I'm planning ahead and it's going to be big. I'm going to plant as many beans as we can freeze.

Now there have been some unexpected benefits to all this. Easily the biggest winner of my global warming, Gram-inspired waste-not quest has been our dog Thunder. She is one happy dog. She now gets those scraps we used to put down the garbage disposal. Of course this means she has to run a bit more which means I have to get off my backside more to let her walk me around. Hmmm.... Actually this new mentality of growing a vegetable garden and moving around more may just help me live 9 decades. Maybe I'll someday have far-out stories for my grandchildren about those wasteful days where we consumed at will and never worried about how much energy we used.



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