

## The Green Thing

In the line at the supermarket, the cashier told the older woman that she should bring her own grocery bag because plastic bags weren't good for the environment. The woman apologized to her and explained, "We didn't have the green thing back in my day."

The clerk responded, "That's our problem today. The former generation did not care enough to save our environment."

She was right, that generation didn't have the green thing in its day.

Back then, they returned their milk bottles, soft drink bottles and beer bottles to the shop. The shop sent them back to the factory to be washed and sterilized and refilled, so it could use the same bottles over and over. They were recycled.

But they didn't have the green thing back in that customer's day.

In her day, they walked up stairs, because they didn't have an escalator in every store and office building. They walked to the grocery store and didn't climb into a 300-horsepower machine every time they had to go two blocks.

But she was right. They didn't have the green thing in her day.

Back then, they washed the baby's nappies because they didn't have the throw-away kind. They dried clothes on a line, not in a 220 volt energy gobbling machine - wind and solar power really did dry the clothes. Kids got hand-me-down clothes from their brothers or sisters, not always brand-new clothing.

But that old lady is right; they didn't have the green thing back in her day.

Back then, they had one TV, or radio, in the house - not a TV in every room. And the TV had a small screen the size of a handkerchief, not a screen the size of a cricket pitch. In the kitchen, they blended and stirred by hand because they didn't have electric machines to do everything for you. When they packaged a fragile item to send in the mail they used a wadded up old newspaper to cushion it, not Styrofoam or plastic bubble wrap. They didn't have air conditioning or electric stoves with self cleaning ovens. They didn't have battery operated toys, computers, or telephones.

Back then, they didn't fire up an engine and burn fuel just to cut the lawn. They used a push mower that ran on human power. They used hand operated clippers to trim the shrubs. They exercised by working so they didn't need to go to a health club to run on treadmills that operate on electricity.

But she's right; they didn't have the green thing back then.

They drank from a glass filled from the tap when they were thirsty instead of using a plastic bottle every time they had a drink of water. They refilled their writing pens with ink instead of buying a new pen, and they replaced the razor blades in a razor instead of throwing away the whole razor just because the blade got dull.

But they didn't have the green thing back then.

Back then, people walked or took the bus and kids rode their bikes to school or rode the school bus instead of turning their mums into a 24-hour taxi service. They had one electrical outlet in a room, not an entire bank of sockets to power a dozen appliances. And they didn't need a computerized gadget to receive a signal beamed from satellites 2,000 miles out in space in order to find the nearest pizza joint.

But isn't it sad the current generation laments how wasteful the old folks were just because they didn't have the green thing back then?

*With thanks to June Hithersay*