

A Snugli Culture Change: According to the inventor of the Snugli (the original hands-free-soft baby carrier) she didn't exactly invent the idea, but adapted a practice going on outside western culture for thousands of years and applied it to life in the culture of her home country the United States. In so doing, she became one of the most influential inventors in history.

Ann Moore (1940-), born and raised on a farm in Ohio, earned her bachelor's degree in nursing from the University of Cincinnati in 1956 and went on to teach pediatric nursing at Columbia University. In the early 1960s Ann, now a young pediatric nurse living in Denver with her husband Mike, was one of the early volunteers to join the newly formed Peace Corps. Mike joined also and they both were assigned to Togo in West Africa.

In this far-away culture, different from that in the U.S., Ann saw more than just another part of the world - she saw another part of life. It was a part of life she found to be deeply beautiful. It would have an unintentional lasting impact on her as well as on western culture itself.

In her daily nursing work of preventative health care in Togo, Ann observed tender acts of humanness the likes of which she had neither observed nor experienced back home in the States. She assessed the compassion she sensed in Togo to be much more advanced.

She saw how the elderly were kept as part of the family until they died and when a sick child was brought to the hospital, she noticed how the mother would bring all the siblings and how they all would sleep on the floor with the sick baby. That was "rooming in," she later recalled noting that it wasn't practiced in very many places in the States — yet.

One practice in particular that touched her deeply was the manner in which African mothers carried their babies in fabric slings tied securely on their backs. The babies were so near to their mothers and quite content to be with their mothers in this manner. Ann liked the closeness between babies and mothers when carried in this way. She observed how the babies seemed so calm, so secure, almost a part of their mother. And, she determined the motion of their mother's movement was likely soothing.



The mothers were content, as well, because they had their hands free for lifting or carrying or doing whatever work they needed to do. And babies, who don't sleep all the time, became very much a part of the moving world when they were awake, because on their mother's backs, they were moving and experiencing life simply as their mothers

moved.

This inner peace Ann observed within the children deeply, deeply affected her. It just seemed that there was so much inner peace, she recalled. Everywhere she looked she saw women carrying their babies wrapped in shawls and around their bodies, leaving them hands-free. But she was most intrigued with the emotional well being of the babies carried this way.

After completing their tours with the Peace Corps, Ann and Mike returned home to the United States. Back in Denver where their first child Mandela (named after Nelson Mandela) was born in 1964, *they* now thought about how *they* were going to carry around their baby. Ann remembered the baby fabric slings in Togo.

When Ann walked out of the hospital maternity ward with Mandy strapped on her back just as an African mother would, with just a long shawl -- a shawl she had brought back from Africa -- the doctors and nurses in that hospital were amazed to see a newborn being carried and transported in this manner.

Typically at that time in America, babies were put in plastic infant seats. The seats were carried about with the babies in them. The babies themselves, however, were not really carried. To Ann this was all plastic and hard. She wanted to experience the same calm closeness with her newborn daughter that she had witnessed African mothers enjoy. So she set out to create a soft, cloth apparatus in which to carry Mandy based on the simple fabric slings used to carry African babies. Her first attempt was unsuccessful. Mandy kept making a slow descent down Ann's back.

But growing up on a farm taught Ann that if you don't have something right at your hands, you have to create your own solution. Thus Ann, who thought of herself more as a problem solver than an inventor, worked on a solution. Her solution was a pouch modeled after a western culture backpack. In her kitchen, she and her mother, who was visiting postpartum, began to experiment sewing these soft, cloth baby carriers.



Ann was able to cook, run errands, even ride her bike, all while bonding with her infant snug in her little pouch. Many moms who saw the two of them out and about would ask where they could buy one. Ann would take an order and Ann's mother, who by now had returned to Ohio, would sew a pouch and mail it out. Soon a cottage industry was born. As orders grew, her mother needed help. Ann's mother turned to her friends who also

were beautiful seamstresses, and also sewed a beautiful product.

This is how production of the Snugli and Ann's business began and developed. Each pouch was produced individually, by hand, in Ohio. They did no official advertising. Marketing was just word of mouth, one parent telling another parent. At one time, Ann estimated they had about 125 cottage workers. It was a lot of hard work, she reminisced, but, "oh my gosh, it has all been such a joy."

In 1965, when Mike and Ann joined in the Civil Rights March from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama with Martin Luther King Jr., baby Mandy marched, too, on Ann's back. Many people commented and emphatically suggested they really needed to patent their pouch. The Moores heeded this advice and patented their little fabric pouch as the "Snugli" in 1969.

After seven years their business reached \$100,000 in sales. Mike, who previously worked other jobs to pay the mortgage, no longer viewed their little business as just a hobby, but now his official full time job. By 1985, the kitchen-table idea had turned into a multimillion-dollar business and was sold to Gerry Baby Products (later purchased by Evenflo).

Soon after, a friend approached them about designing a backpack for patients who depend on oxygen tanks to breathe. This practical invention birthed a second successful family business called Air Lift. Today, based out of Evergreen, CO, Air Lift offers a broad line of soft-sided oxygen carriers, equipment accessories and home-health professional bags.

Ann and Mike live in their "totally green" sustainable adobe-style home in the foothills west of Denver where often they serve as a host family to foreign visitors for the U.S. Department of State.

Ann Moore's Snugli design has been honored with permanent placement in the Smithsonian Institute and was recognized by the Wall Street Journal as one of the most important inventions of the 20th century. For sure it was a Snugli culture change.

Sources: <http://americacomesalive.com/newsletter-archive/important-inventions-women-may-2014/>; <http://magazine.uc.edu/issues/0810/moore.html> University of Cincinnati; <http://www.women-inventors.com/Ann-Moore.asp>; <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/the-mom-who-invented-the-snugli/>.