

Rural Route 4 Televisions

The other night, I relaxed in my recliner with the television remote in one hand and a soft drink in the other, trying to figure out what to watch. A movie? Andy Griffith? Football re-runs? A documentary? You would think that it would not be too hard for me to decide, but with about 140 channels at my fingertips, it was like deciding which candy bar to buy with my dime when I was a kid in Lynn's 5 & 10.



Phillip Burgess

Decisions, decisions. More channels. More options. More entertainment. But it has not always been this way. Yes, at one time televisions were a novelty.

I was six years old when the Burgess family on Rural Route 4 got our first television. It had a big round screen, took about three minutes to "warm up" and weighed about eighty pounds. Knobs on the front controlled volume, vertical and horizontal adjustment, and one let you choose from thirteen channels.

Daddy Grand had surprised us when he brought it home in the trunk of our 1959 rose-colored Impala. It was too big for the trunk and Daddy Grand had taken twine from a couple of bales of hay and tied it in. The trunk lid would not close, so he also tied it.

I cannot remember how he managed to wrangle the massive thing through the front door, but he did. He centered it between two windows in the living room so that we could run the antenna wire through one of the windows, up the metal pole attached to the side of the house and then to the antenna about ten feet above the crown of our roof.

The Burgess house could now be entertained by three channels: two in Birmingham and one in Huntsville, all representing the three major networks. But there was a catch. The antenna had to be adjusted depending on which station we watched. Tuning in to the Birmingham channels meant pointing the antenna one way and watching the Huntsville station meant pointing it in another direction.

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Watts Happening

Save on Energy This Summer

Keep it clean: Keep your outside air unit clean and clear of debris or weeds.

Use sunscreen: Keep curtains closed on the south, east and west sides of the house during the day to help block sunlight and keep it cool.

Turn up the base: Set your thermostat to the highest comfortable temperature. EnergyRight recommends a setting of 75 degrees or higher.

Time it right: Don't do energy-reliant chores during the hottest times of the day, when rates are at their peak. Minimize usage on weekdays between 1 and 7 p.m.

Bask in the sun: Take your clothes out to dry in the open air. Your clothes dryer is practically a furnace, and it makes a muggy home feel even muggier.

Wear shades: Have a little green-thumb fun and plant a tree. Shade trees on the south or southwest side of your home will help keep it cooler.

Breathe: Change your air filters monthly so your hard-working cooling system can do its job properly.

Don't be a drip: Repair leaky faucets. One drop per second can add up to whopping 165 gallons a month.



Join us Aug. 18 for a THS Wildcat Tailgate Party before the first home game of the season! We'll have free pizza, drinks, and T-shirts for the first 250 students grade K-8 who arrive. Then watch the full season **LIVE** on LightTube Channel 23. Call 455-4515 to subscribe!

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Aug 27: LightTube Movie Night

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It fell to me to be the “antenna guy,” and I was responsible for ensuring the antenna was turned in the right direction. If it was not, I had to run outside and “turn” the metal pole in the right direction.

While making the adjustments loud voices from the living room directed me to “move it a little to the left” or just a “tad toward the right.” A loud “stop” signaled I had it finely tuned. That old television served us well. We had it for about eight years before Daddy Grand upgraded to a new color version.

Those long-gone days are special to me because our family could take a break from the rigors of life and watch television together. On Saturday afternoons, Daddy Grand and I would watch the NBC Game of the Week with Dizzy Dean and Pee Wee Reese.

On Sunday afternoons, the Bear Bryant Show was a must see as well. Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom thrilled me, and the Wonderful World of Disney helped my imagination run wild.

Today, there are four televisions in our house. Each has a remote to change the channels. The world is at my fingertips on huge screens in living color. Even so I think I might welcome a return to those early days of television.

I might even learn to like the Lawrence Welk Show. That is, if I could turn the antenna in the right direction.

Philip Burgess' book, “Rural Route 4, The Good Ol' Days Were Never Better,” is available on Amazon.