It's Amazing What a 40-Watt Bulb Can Do!

William Kirkland was 8 years old when electricity was finally delivered to his home in 1939. The nearest electricity at that time was in Hamilton, so having the ability to finally have light in the farmhouse where he grew up was indeed a BIG deal.

William had begun to attend school, and like most kids of that era, he was doing his farm chores until after dark, then doing his homework by flickering lantern light. Since he had grown up that way, it was not at all foreign to him. That is, until the first night that he did his homework by the light of the 40-watt incandescent lightbulb above the kitchen table. He said it was absolutely amazing how much light that simple little 40-watt bulb could produce.

As we sat in the living room of his mother and dad's old homeplace this morning, we laughed about how times have changed. Today, one 40-watt light bulb in a room would seem so unproductive. In a day and age where we can flood a room with light at the flick of one little switch, it is amazing to think that at one time an 8-year-old boy was overjoyed to have a mere 40 watts by which to accomplish his schoolwork.

As with the other members I have met, William's dad had wired the house himself before the installation of the poles that led to the house. The holes for the poles were dug by hand, and each hole took two men to dig: one to run the shovel, or digger, and one to keep the dirt scooped out of the hole. It was a long, drawn-out process, and each hole took approximately a day to complete. And to a young boy just 8 and not very tall, those holes looked mighty deep.

The Kirkland family lived just across the dirt road from William's grandparents. The Cotton Belt Railway ran across the countryside just southeast of both houses. Those tracks were removed sometime around 1941 and no longer exist. In fact, I did not realize that a railway had ever existed in the area.

William's grandparents had piped-in gas that produced light much brighter than that given off by the kerosene lamps. Therefore, they were not in quite as big a hurry for electricity and did not have theirs connected until later. But the day electricity was first delivered to the home of William's parents was indeed a momentous occasion.

Electric appliances were slow in coming due to the money situations, but the first major electrical purchase for both William's parents and grandparents were brand new GE refrigerators purchased in 1939. This was indeed an exciting day for both families as they had been depending on the common "ice boxes" that were used at that time in almost all rural homes.

As William described it, both families were "tickled to death" with those refrigerators. Both are still running and are still in use in the old farmhouse. William's mother bought a newer model shortly before her death, but it has long since quit running and is used just for storage now.

At the time electricity first began to be delivered to the rural areas, the meters were still being read by the members. The members would read their meters at the end of the month, and the bill was due by the 10th. Of

Every week, William and Betty Kirkland visit the homeplace where William grew up.

The electric refrigerators bought in 1939 by William Kirkland's parents and his grandparents are still in use today.

course at that time, the only thing that ran off electricity in many homes was the lights, thus the "electric bill" was more commonly called the "light bill."

William's wife, Betty, said that she always got a kick out of Mr. and Mrs. Kirkland because they believed that the "light bill" had to be paid exactly on the 10th. No matter what was going on in their lives, they always made a special trip to town on that date to get the bill paid.

Originally a log house built sometime prior to 1900, the farmhouse has been updated and added onto over the years and still stands just as it did when Mrs. Kirkland passed away.

There are certainly many more electric appliances in the home than there were in 1939, and the incandescent lights have been replaced with fluorescent ones. But the home is still in excellent shape, and William and Betty visit it every Monday and spend the day out there.

The home is now "A Texas Century Farm" due to the fact that it has been maintained in continuous operation for more than a hundred years by the same family.

AND THE SURVEY SAYS ...

During the months of October and November, Comanche Electric Cooperative sent out a Member Survey with each bill that was mailed. The surveys are in, and the results are being tabulated. Thank you to all who returned your survey. Your opinions are important to us, and all opinions and suggestions will be read and discussed by our management and board of directors.

You can expect to see the results, along with a letter from our manager, posted here in *Texas Co-op Power* as soon as they have been tabulated. We at Comanche Electric strive to give you the best possible service at the least possible price. We hope to be able to improve on all that we do based on your answers, and we look forward to serving you for many more years to come.

DON'T BREAK THE BANK TO SAVE ENERGY

There's no need to spend a lot of money to save a little energy.

The Alliance to Save Energy has identified the best low- and no-cost ways to lower your energy bill and keep your piggy bank full:

TURN OFF LIGHTS, TVS AND MUSIC SYSTEMS when you leave a room. Shut down computers if you'll be away for a long period, or activate the unit's sleep mode for a short-term break.

DRESS IN LAYERS in the winter and throw an extra blanket on the bed so you can turn the thermostat down a few more degrees.

LOWER THE TEMPERATURE ON THE WATER HEATER to 120 degrees and wash clothes in cold water. Help your water heater work more efficiently by wrapping it in a $20 insulation blanket.

DON'T HEAT UNUSED SPACE such as guest rooms. Close doors and vents until you need the room.

WEATHERSTRIP YOUR WINDOWS AND DOORS. It's inexpensive and easy to do, and it's one of the best ways to trap warm air indoors.

SEAL JOINTS IN EXPOSED DUCTWORK in the basement and attic.

INSTALL STORM WINDOWS or smooth plastic sheeting over the panes.

LOW-FLOW SHOWERHEADS and sink aerators pump out less hot water.

For more energy conservation tips that won't bust your budget, go to www.powerisinyourhands.org.

Comanche Hosts Area High School Students at John Ben Shepperd Leadership Forum

Students from 11 area school districts attended the John Ben Shepperd Leadership Forum, where they learned skills they could take back to their communities.

Texas has a great past, but what about its future? The answer depends on our ability to prepare and train the next generation of leaders. Without opportunity, motivation and education, the next generation will not be equipped to provide the positive leadership necessary to meet the challenges of tomorrow. It is to this end that Comanche Electric Cooperative teams up with The University of Texas of the Permian Basin to sponsor the John Ben Shepperd Leadership Forum each year.

More than a traditional learning experience, the forum is an event where students commonly discover themselves. The forum, led by community leaders, not only offers young people the opportunity to learn leadership, communications and goal-setting skills, it also heightens their awareness of responsible citizenship. Forum attendees discussed public affairs issues that affect our local communities and state while learning skills for affecting positive change.

This year's forum was attended by 80 students from 11 schools within the cooperative's service area. Students attended from Brownwood, Comanche, Cross Plains, De Leon, Eastland, Gorman, Hamilton, Mullin, Ranger, Sidney and Zephyr schools. These students first learned valuable leadership skills. Then, they put those skills into action. Each school left the forum with a Community Service Project that the students themselves had thought up and planned.

Eugene Kiefer, senior business counselor from Texas Tech University's Small Business Development Center, spoke to the students and told of other towns whose students had a vision, put it into action, and started community service programs that are still in effect today, which have brought tourism, business growth and income into their towns. He encouraged the students to be creative and to follow through on their plans.

Keep your eyes open in these 11 school districts for big things to come! And you can expect to hear more from these students in the coming months, through *Texas Co-op Power* and on our website at www.ceca.coop, as we follow the progress that these students make with their projects.

Will Using an Electric Blanket Save Energy?

DEAR JAMES: I set the furnace thermostat lower at night, but my family complains it feels cold. Will using an electric blanket save energy overall? What are the most efficient ones, and are there other tips for staying comfortable? —*Sandi M.*

DEAR SANDI: Setting back the furnace thermostat at night can cut your utility bills significantly during the winter. Depending upon your climate, you can reduce your heating bills by 1 to 2 percent for each degree you lower the thermostat setting at night.

The best method to have a comfortable temperature setback at night is to install a programmable clock thermostat. Program it so it does not start to lower the temperature until just after you are in bed and then raises it just before you awake in the morning. If you manually set a standard thermostat lower at bedtime, the entire house will be very cold when your family awakes in the morning. The earlier you can set the thermostat lower, the more you will save, so experiment with earlier times as your family adjusts to the temperature changes.

This heated mattress pad has dual ambient controls so each side of the bed can be a different temperature.

Using an electric blanket or heated mattress pad is an excellent method to stay comfortable all night long. My computerized thermostat always lowers the temperature at night, and I have used an electric blanket for years. Recently though, I have switched to a dual control (one for each side) electric mattress pad. I prefer feeling the warmth from beneath my body and less weight on top of me.

My queen-size mattress pad uses only 220 watts, and it cycles on and off to maintain a steady temperature. The average electricity usage is less than 100 watts, about as much as a standard light bulb uses. When you compare this to cutting your heating bills by up to 10 percent, the overall electricity savings are significant.

The key differences among various brands and models of electric blankets and mattress pads are the controls and the heating wires. The best, but more expensive, models use digital ambient temperature controls. This circuitry senses room temperature throughout the night and automatically increases the heat output to compensate for steady comfort. Better blankets also use longer-lasting fabrics.

Better controls have a preheat setting and also provide nearly silent operation. Cheaper electric controls make a quiet click when the internal thermostat switches them on and off throughout the night. If you cannot fall asleep easily, the clicking can become quite annoying.

Select a blanket or mattress pad with PTC (positive thermal coefficient) heating wire. Its resistance changes as the temperature changes. Where the blanket or pad is resting tightly over or under your body, and therefore warmer, its heating output decreases. This maintains a more constant sleeping temperature near your body.

ELECTRICITY & YOU— WHAT TO DO FOR ...

ELECTRICAL FIRES

- Get out.
- Notify 9-1-1. Tell the dispatcher it is an electrical fire.
- Stay away.

ELECTRICAL SHOCK

- Do not touch anyone or thing you think might have been electrically shocked. The victim may still be in contact with the electricity.
- Call 9-1-1. Tell the dispatcher the incident involves electricity.
- Keep other people away from the continued danger.
- Understand that electrical shock may cause internal injuries. The person needs to be seen by a doctor, even if you don't see any burn marks.

DOWNED POWER LINES

- Move quickly away even if you do not see sparks.
- Call 9-1-1.
- Stay away from anything that might touch the wire: a fence, a tree, a building, a car.
- Wait for help.

POWER LINE TOUCHING THE CAR YOU ARE IN

- Stay in the car.
- If people move toward the vehicle, motion for them to stay away. Have someone call 9-1-1.
- Stay in the car until help arrives.

POWER OUTAGES

Build a kit to help be more comfortable in the event of a power outage. Basics might include:

- Flashlights for each member of the household
- Battery-powered radio
- Extra batteries for each item
- Canned food and can opener
- Prepackaged foods
- Bottled water for drinking and cleaning
- First-aid kit
- Essential medications
- Toiletry items
- Books and games to pass the time