

# When TV Was New

## Do-It-Yourself Viewing

NIGHT AFTER NIGHT, in 1955, my dad could be found bent over the workbench under a bright light bulb in our basement, building a television through a correspondence course.

Once each month, a box of parts would arrive at our home, and down to the basement Dad would go to perform the latest assignment.

Finally, the big day came. Up the stairs and into the living room Dad proudly carried the TV, with all the tubes and wires exposed, as no cabinet came with the project.

Dad had everyone stand back just in case the TV blew up as he plugged it in and turned it on. Behold, there, in front of my eyes was a snowy picture—it worked! Dad wouldn't let me touch the TV, much less turn it on. "Just in case," he said.

I guess Dad was never very comfortable with the homemade TV himself, because after a month or two, he traded it in on a new Zenith TV with a blond-wood cabinet. It took more than 3 weeks before he could convince this 5-year-old it was okay to turn on the TV and change the channels.

—Lanajo Chase, Lapeer, Michigan

## TV Mountain Men

BACK IN 1959 and through the early '60s, a lot of people in our area of West Virginia lived in hollows. The way we got TV reception was running naked, suspended wires—nailed to trees and separated by glass or porcelain insulators—to an antenna on the top of a mountain. We couldn't afford the plastic-coated wires.

When our picture went out, usually because of a limb or a tree that

had fallen on the wires, somebody had to climb up the mountain until the problem was found. Boy, did we dread to see a thunderstorm come through.

One thing about running a TV line was the dangers, such as snakes like rattlers and copperheads. It would take a number of people at various locations on the mountain for the person watching the TV to relay that the picture was back on the screen.

My dad was innovative. Not only did he put the antenna on the mountain, he built a tower to get it above the trees. Some people could afford to put boosters on their lines to receive more channels, but Dad was a coal miner with seven mouths to feed. With all of his work, we received only two stations: WSAZ, out of Huntington, and WVVA, out of Bluefield.

—Larry Dean Preece, Lynco, West Virginia