

## Rural Route 4 Coal December

Seventy-five years ago, in a small white house on a hill on Sand Mountain, coping with winters was quite different than today. The marvels of technology: heat pumps, geothermal, natural gas and even solar have tamed winter's fury and erased from memory the struggles of country folks who survived without these inventions. But old timers (and I've reached the age where I qualify) will tell you that in rural areas across the South and in other places, it was harder than simply adjusting the thermostat.

It's easy to picture romantic evenings sitting around a large fireplace, warm and cozy, while watching the fire crackle and pop. The sad truth is there wasn't much romance attached to a frigid night in a house that wasn't weather-proof. If my granddaddy, Pa Burgess, were here today, he would tell you about cold nights where rooms were shut off from the main living room so that heat from the small fireplace wouldn't be lost. His small fireplace was the only source of heat in the entire house. Bedtime meant crawling between several quilts for warmth.

Then, in the morning, fat wood (we called it lighter wood) and paper were essential to get the fire going again after it had burned out during the previous evening. Pa Burgess kept his fat wood in small bundles near the fireplace.



**Phillip Burgess**

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## Project Help

Each year, TUA customers contribute nearly \$10,000 to those in need.

Your contribution of \$1 or more added to your utility bill can help elderly and disabled residents keep warm this winter.

Project Help funds are distributed only to the elderly or disabled using specific guidelines. The program is administered by Good Samaritan.

To sign up, call 455-4515.



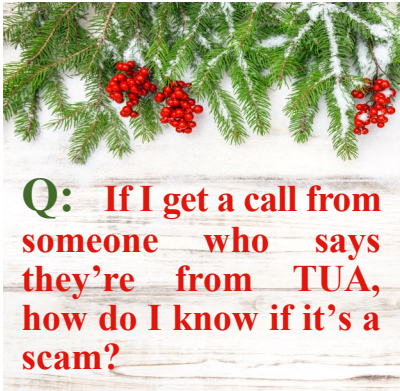
## Save Money on Your Energy Bill This Winter

Cold weather forces your heating unit to work harder to keep your home at a comfortable temperature, meaning more energy is used. Here are some ways to save energy and money on your bill:

- Start your thermostat at 68 degrees. Every degree warmer increases your bill by 1 percent.
- Lower the thermostat when you're out. But don't lower a heat pump's thermostat more than three degrees.
- Use weatherstripping to seal door and window leaks.

- Replace filters monthly, and keep your heating and air conditioning equipment clean.
- Lower your water heater thermostat to 120 degrees if your dishwasher has a heating option.
- Wash full dishwasher and laundry loads, and choose short cycles to conserve water and save on water heating. For laundry, use cold water, if possible.
- Use LED holiday lights. LEDs are at least 75 percent more efficient and last up to 25 times longer than traditional light.

# Watts Happening



**Q: If I get a call from someone who says they're from TUA, how do I know if it's a scam?**

**A:** Don't believe anyone who calls to say your power will be shut off unless you pay now. TUA calls customers with information, but does not use calls for service termination.

Never give your financial information to someone who calls or emails you. TUA does not ask for that information or for pre-paid cards.

Don't give someone who comes to your home or business money or a pre-paid card for your TUA bill.

TUA does not collect bills in the field. If you suspect a scam, please call TUA at 455-4515.



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These valuable fire starters were from pine trees that had died, and over time, the sap had settled in the heartwood. They had a wonderful smell like some cleaning products used today. Back in those days coal was the preferred fuel for fireplaces. It burns slowly with little flame and high heat.

Pa Burgess was no different. Near one of his sheds, not far from the house, was Pa's coal pile. When the leaves changed colors and the temperatures started dropping, Pa would stop by the coal yard during one of his Saturday trips to town.

The coal yard was near the railroad tracks in Boaz, only a stone's throw from the icehouse where we bought blocks of ice for making ice cream. Pa would order a truckload, usually a ton or so, and agree on a delivery date. It would arrive in a small dump truck and emptied at the coal pile. Sometimes the coal was in large chunks and had to be broken into smaller pieces. It was dirty work, but essential for keeping warm.

Also essential were coal skuttles (also called a coal bucket or hod), one being placed near the coal pile and a second on the hearth near the fireplace. As the coal was used, the coal skuttles were exchanged, a full one for an empty one.

And woe to the person who forgot to swap the coal skuttles. This unfortunate one would have to make a mad dash to the coal pile, regardless of the weather. Oftentimes, I was tasked with filling the coal skuttles and exchanging them. And my forgetfulness meant many mad dashes to the coal pile in inclement weather.

Today, some states have enacted laws that prohibit using coal for heating, mostly because of environmental concerns. It has joined other relics from the good old days that sadly have disappeared except in the memories of folks who lived in those challenging times.

*Philip Burgess' book, "Rural Route 4, The Good Ol' Days Were Never Better," is available on Amazon. If you have a topic you'd like to share, email [smokeisguy17@gmail.com](mailto:smokeisguy17@gmail.com)*

## Winter Peak Hours Now in Effect

For your most wallet-friendly bill, curb your electric use each weekday between 4:00 and 10:00 a.m. through March.

