

Hard for city folks to imagine, but only last year, it was dark on our farm yard at night time. We had to carry kerosene lanterns around to do chores. Real carefully!

I'm Ken Sparrow, farm kid near Fairfax. It's 1949. Electricity is brand new to us. Cities and larger towns got electricity at least 40 years ago. Now that we have it, boy is life ever changing. I'm the oldest, born in 1937. My youngest brother John doesn't even remember not having power. Change happened so quickly.

There's a small two-seater building out by the garden, we call the Parliament House. I guess because of the important decisions adults make out there. Not sure. But I do know, the dash to parliament house is way easier with our electric yard light!

Mom's pretty happy too. Dad rigged up an electric motor that runs her washing machine. And she's got an electric oven! No more chopping firewood into small sizes for the wood stove. Whew. Works for me! And lights in every room. It's way easier doing our homework without squinting beside a candle.

My favourite change, though, is the yard light. It's so easy to get around the yard. Same at our neighbours, where we play Auntie Auntie I Over way into the evening! My dad figures we know who lives on every farm from here to Minto, and, from here to Elgin. There's a farm every mile at least. That's a lot of neighbours. And every one has a yard light! When we drive home from visiting family, and there's no moon, we can still see where every family lives. Their yard lights sparkle like they're waving "Hi" to us. It's not possible to be alone. When their cars break down, folks head for the nearest light to get help.

Back a few years, our parents were called to a meeting, asking everyone in the area to sign up for electricity. Because of the good turnout, Manitoba Power Commission built our power lines for free. They figure we'll pay it off with our monthly bills. Good deal, I'm thinking.

Electricity also makes barn chores much easier. Especially in winter. Feeding chickens. Cleaning the stables. Checking mama cat and her kittens. And milking! We have a beef cow that's a good milker. Ornerly though! Yikes. If we don't tie her tail up to the beam, she lines up to hoof my shin, the pail, my three legged

stool, a thirsty cat or all at the same time. It's annoying as all get out. Lights sure make it easier to get chores set up and done safely.

Even last year, using kerosene lanterns to do our barn work, there was always danger. Mom wouldn't let the best and brightest lanterns out of the house. So we used the ones with thicker glass and wire cages. But still, if one got knocked over, with so much straw around, the barn would go up in no time.

Well, Mom just called for supper. The house has a switch for the yard light. She's flicking it, so it's time to go. First, I'll saunter through the yard light's glow to make a decision in the Parliament House.

*Vantage Points Flashbacks were written by David Neufeld with help from Betty Sawatzky. They were originally aired on CJRB Radio out of Boissevain, Manitoba in the early 2020s.*