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We Adapt to Changes Comfortably

DURING the 100-degree days of recent weeks we have heard several people wonder out loud, "How did we survive before air conditioning?"

The answer is the same way most people on the globe are surviving today. We Oklahomans race from air-conditioned houses to air-conditioned cars to air-conditioned stores, offices or factories but we still constitute an air-conditioned minority in the world.

The human race never seems to have any difficulty in adapting to new conveniences and comforts. The number of these that have come into existence in the last century or two is amazing. A review of these changes appears in "The Smithsonian Book of Invention," published in 1978, and now in its third printing.

It was less than 200 years ago that Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin, Robert Fulton launched his steamboat and the first steel plow was invented to change the way of farming. In 1880 the Holt 24-horse combined harvester and thresher came into being. In 1830 the first

passenger trains started running in the United States.

We live in a world of pictures because in 1839 a Frenchman named Daguerre devised a chemical process to make photographs possible. In 1893 Thomas A. Edison patented "an apparatus for exhibiting photographs of moving objects," the movie camera. In 1927 talking pictures came into existence.

Elias Howe developed his sewing machine in 1845, Walter Hunt invented the safety pin in 1849, and in 1912 the first Speed Queen washing machine appeared. The first plastic, celluloid, was patented in 1870, the aluminum process in 1886.

Electricity serves as our "slave" for countless tasks not even dreamed of when Edison's Pearl Street station lighted 83 homes in New York City in 1882.

Americans didn't invent the automobile but we have put quite a few into use. It was only 80 years ago that the Wright brothers flew at Kittyhawk and in 1942 the first U.S. jet

flight was made.

In 1920 the first scheduled radio broadcasts were made in the United States. The first commercial television station began operating in 1941 and WKY-TV became the first in Oklahoma in 1949.

Our offices are filled with word processors, computers and copying machines, but early public records, including the state constitution, were written in script.

"We have conquered earth, explored the moon, and voyaged with automaton limbs, eyes and minds throughout the solar system, yet we now sense the urgent need to complete our brilliantly lit cities and consider what will happen if the power goes off," says the Smithsonian Book of Inventions. "Are we victims or beneficiaries of our highly prized creative impulse?"

Most of us would agree that we are beneficiaries because we live longer, eat better and enjoy more comforts and conveniences than the richest potentates of the past. We adapt well to them.