

# Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives  
serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

## Claverack REC

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Monday through Friday

7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Jeff Fetzer, CCC, *Local Pages Editor*

## From the President & CEO



## Exciting projects on tap in 2017

By Bobbi Kilmer

WELCOME to February, the shortest month of the year! Believe it or not, spring is right around the corner, and I'm certain most of you are already making plans for outdoor activities and projects to tackle once the weather breaks.

Here at the cooperative, we've been busy putting together our own exciting "to-do" list for 2017.

### Trees top list

One of the challenges we always face is keeping our utility line rights of way clear of vegetation.

The widespread die-off of ash trees throughout our service territory in recent years has complicated our task of maintaining more than 2,500 miles of power line right-of-way. To help us address this new challenge, we are partnering with ACRT Inc., an independent utility vegetation management company.

ACRT will be doing an assessment of our electric system this year to help us better understand the conditions existing throughout our system, as well as the characteristics of the vegetation growing on and along our rights of way.

Ultimately, ACRT will be responsible for recommending a vegetation management plan of action that will have the greatest impact on system reliability within the confines of our right-of-way budget, which, for 2017, is in excess of \$2 million.

This is a significant expense, so we sought expert advice on how to best direct this investment. ACRT will also provide us with an on-site utility forester who will assist us in planning and monitoring right-of-way clearing work

in the field throughout the year.

### Line improvements


We have a number of line improvement projects planned in 2017. They include several single-phase to three-phase upgrades, including a 6.5-mile upgrade in the Hollenback area, and two line section upgrades in the Franklin Forks area that will total about 6 miles.

We will also be working on completing a three-phase tie line between our Steinbach and Hop Bottom substations, as well as interconnecting two main circuits within our Steinbach station. We are also completing design work for future projects in the Vernon area. The work on these projects will be performed by BNF Powerline Construction, supplemented by our line crews.

### Communications work

Another 2017 project we are excited about involves replacing our low-band radio system with a VHF digital system. In addition to providing us with better radio coverage, there are a number of features that will enhance our ability to communicate with employees in the field. We will also be replacing our outdated office telephone system in 2017. We are looking forward to having features such as the ability to record calls, which should help us improve service to our members.

Finally, as part of our facilities upgrade program, we will be applying a fresh coat of paint to the exterior of our Montrose District office.

So, just like you, we have a busy year ahead. Enjoy and stay safe. 

# Susquehanna County's super sleuth

By Jeff Fetzer

WITHIN the fraternal world of criminologists, detectives and forensics experts, he's known, to his chagrin, as the living Sherlock Holmes.

Outside a Susquehanna County veterans club, patrons cheerily greet him simply as "Rich" as he arrives on a brisk December morn to deliver a large bag of his homemade cookies to the employees.

Slim, bespectacled and donning a herringbone sport coat, the Claverack member's professorial appearance and display of conviviality at his favorite social spot betray his reputation as an intense, sharp-tongued recluse and one of the world's top detectives, specializing in solving crimes of extreme violence.

Fresh off a stint as scholar-in-residence of forensic science at Oklahoma State University, Richard Walter recently returned to the cozy confines of his Montrose-area ranch home, where, surrounded by an eclectic collection of antiques and curios and a splendid view of the Endless Mountains, he spends his days composing on the piano, listening to opera and counseling law enforcement on cold cases over black coffee, Kool cigarettes, and his trademark chocolate chip and gingersnap cookies.

The world-renowned sleuth settled in Susquehanna County about 16 years ago after spending considerable time here consulting as an expert witness for the state in the trial of Dr. Stephen Scher, who was convicted, twice, of killing his friend, Martin Dillon, in 1976.

"I was living in Michigan and working a lot in Philadelphia at the time, so my original intent was to have a house up here and use it as a retreat and as a way to detox," says Walter. "Life never goes as you plan it. I ended up developing friends and found living here agreeable."

## Mastering criminal minds

Richard Walter didn't set out to

become an authority on criminal minds and matters.

Born in Ohio and raised in Washington state, Walter says he "wandered around wondering what I wanted to do and be" following boarding school and a short-lived marriage when he was a young man. His roving led him to Lansing, Mich., where he landed a job in the department of pharmacology at Michigan State University (MSU). There, Walter worked as a lab technician for several years until his "brilliant but arrogant and condescending" boss belittled him because he didn't have a college degree.

"It annoyed me," he recalls. "So I said, 'I'm quitting and going to go back to school,' and then he laughed at me. It was the best thing that ever happened."

Walter enrolled in college, earning a bachelor's degree in educational psychology from MSU, as well as a master's degree.

He then accepted a position in the Los Angeles Department of Coroner working as a student professional. To maintain "student" status, thus his employment, he continued to take college courses, focusing on criminal justice and criminology. But it was within the department of coroner where his real education took place.

"I got a treasure trove of information working in the coroner's office," he says. "People would ask me to look at this crime or this body, and I did that seven days a week. In two and a-half years, I accumulated thousands of cases in my head that I could rely on

for my later work."

Walter notes his tenure with the department of coroner coincided with the Hillside Strangler's reign of terror in Los Angeles in 1977-78, and he remembers viewing each of the 10 victims of serial-killing cousins Kenneth Bianchi and Angelo Buono as they were being processed.

"I saw the dastardly work that killers did," says Walter, "and I wanted a little more insight into the mind."

That opportunity would come later in 1978, when he landed a job as a prison psychologist with the Michigan Department of Corrections. Over



AN EYE FOR EVIL: Claverack member Richard Walter, one of the world's top authorities on criminal profiling and extreme violence, demonstrates the icy stare he sometimes employs when interrogating violent criminals and murder suspects. The Montrose-area resident, known as the living Sherlock Holmes, was one of the founders of the Vidocq Society, an exclusive organization of detectives and forensics experts that provides assistance to law enforcement in the investigation of unsolved murders and disappearances.

the next two decades, Walter would interview more than 20,000 inmates of Michigan's prison system, delving into the dark minds of some of the state's most violent offenders, and, in the process, he would become an expert in extremely violent criminal behavior and criminal profiling.

He was invited to join the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, and his presentations at the academy's national convention and his growing reputation as one of the nation's top criminal profilers led to invitations to lecture and consult in grisly murder cases across the country and around the globe.

### The detective collective

In 1990, Walter teamed up with U.S. Customs Service Special Agent William Fleisher and forensic sculptor Frank Bender to form the Vidocq Society, initially an informal organization dedicated to discussing and debating crimes and mysteries over lunch. The exclusive group, which continues to meet monthly in Philadelphia, has grown to more than 150 U.S. and international forensics experts in a variety of disciplines and focuses on providing free consultation to aid law enforcement in the investigation into unsolved deaths and disappearances.

Named for Eugène François Vidocq, a 19th century French detective who helped police by using the psychology of the criminal to solve "cold case" homicides, the Vidocq Society received considerable public attention after the television show "America's Most Wanted" used a bust created by Frank Bender, with significant input from Walter, to capture John List in 1989, 18 years after he killed his family in New Jersey and vanished.

The Vidocq Society's three founders and the organization's successes in solving a number of cold cases are chronicled, at times in very graphic detail, in the 2010 book, "The Murder Room — The Heirs of Sherlock Holmes Gather to Solve the World's Most Perplexing Cold Cases," by Michael Capuzzo.

The book, which cracked the *New*

*York Times* Best Sellers list for non-fiction, brought even more exposure to the society. Too much, perhaps, for the reclusive Walter.

Walter reveals that he resigned from the Vidocq Society in December.

"It's been a good run for 25 years," he says, "but when we were more of a secret society, it seemed to go better. Then celebrity, notoriety, money, all those issues came into the play."

### A training mission

With his departure from the Vidocq Society, the 74-year-old says he will be taking on a new mission. Walter and Patrick Zirpoli, retired supervisor of the criminal investigation assessment unit of the Pennsylvania State Police, will be heading up a program aimed at providing low-cost training in crime assessment techniques to law enforcement personnel across the country.

The program, operating under the

*"I like the cold cases, because they are more intractable. I enjoy the puzzle. And on a much more banal level, I enjoy matching and topping the smarts of the criminal."*

auspices of the newly created Sherry Black Education Foundation, will provide officers with three days of training and two days of case consultation. Walter says the goal is to train about 1,000 officers a year.

Sherry Black, the mother-in-law of former Utah Jazz CEO Greg Miller, was murdered in the Utah bookstore she owned in 2010. The Vidocq Society was called in to investigate the unsolved murder in 2012 after Black's daughter, Heidi Miller, learned of the organization while reading "The Murder Room." Walter, who continues to investigate the cold case, has developed a relationship with the Miller family over the years, leading to the establishment of the crime assessment training program.

"This will be a service-oriented proj-

ect," he says. "So it not only educates, but teaches you how to do it while you are watching. I want the cop to understand why he is doing what he is doing. I want to build up the investigative skill set. It's a thinking man's game, and I think it's terribly important."

Although he is often referred to as a criminal profiler, Walter says he prefers to be called a crime assessment consultant.

He says profiling primarily deals with the characteristics of the individual committing a crime, while crime assessment takes into account pre-crime, crime and post-crime behaviors and evidence to help develop suspects.

In addition to leading the education project, Walter says he will continue to serve as a consultant on cold cases, noting he is typically working with law enforcement on at least 10 unsolved cases, typically murders, at any given time.

"I like the cold cases, because they are more intractable," the detective says. "I enjoy the puzzle. And on a much more banal level, I enjoy matching and topping the smarts of the criminal."

While Walter has been involved in the investigation of many high-profile murder cases, he says his most memorable case involved the disappearance of Scott Dunn in Lubbock, Texas, on May 16, 1991.

### Unlikely conviction

"It was one of those cases I refused to give up on," he says, noting he spent at least 6,000 hours working with Lubbock law enforcement and the missing boy's father, Jim Dunn of Yardley, Pa.

Despite the fact that Scott Dunn's body had not been recovered nor a

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**Super Sleuth**

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murder weapon found, Walter was able to help convince a grand jury that a murder had taken place, and that Dunn's live-in roommate, Leisha Hamilton, and her boyfriend, Tim Smith, were responsible for his death.

"I testified at grand jury, and everybody in law enforcement told me, 'Richard, you are probably right, but with no body, no weapon, they are going to laugh you out of that grand jury,'" he recalls.

Not only did the grand jury indict both Hamilton and Smith, both were later convicted of Dunn's murder. The saga is detailed in a 2005 book, "Trail of Blood," by Wanda Evans, and was also featured on the television program "Forensic Files."

The body of Scott Dunn was finally found in 2012 — 21 years after his disappearance — in a shallow grave less than 100 feet from the apartment he shared with Leisha Hamilton.

**Fixing a murder**

While helping unravel a cold case like the Dunn disappearance can be very fulfilling, Walter admits that a lifetime of encounters with evil minds and deeds can exact an emotional toll.

"If I had a child, God forbid, I would never encourage them to follow in my footsteps," he says. "The price is very,

very high. That said, if I had to live my life over, I would do the exact same thing. I was delighted to divorce my wife and marry my profession, and my passion has remained."

The psychologist notes that while dealing with the darkest depths of humanity on a daily basis for decades has jaded him, he also knows he is making a positive difference in society by helping put a murderer behind bars or bringing closure to a family with a missing spouse, son, or daughter.

"Is it rewarding? Yes," he says. "My father once told me that it's not enough to exist, you have to be productive, and I believe that. You have to have some sense of purpose. I can't fix a sink, but I can fix a murder."

So what does the "living Sherlock Holmes," one of the world's foremost experts on sadism, cannibalism and various perversities, do to keep his mind from dwelling on the depravity he's been exposed to for 40 years?

"I play piano for my satisfaction and to the misery of others, and I can cook, and I like to collect antiques," says Walter, who also enjoys a good glass of chardonnay and socializing at the local veterans club. "Do I live an eccentric and quirky life? Yes."

And he enjoys living that life in Susquehanna County, where friends call him Rich and make a fuss over his chocolate chip and gingersnap cookies. 🍪

**Energy assistance program offers help with heating bills**

If you need assistance paying your heating bills, you may be able to receive help through the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

Funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the program provides energy-assistance grants to help low-income households pay their heating bills through the winter.

LIHEAP offers both cash grants and crisis grants. Cash grants help families pay their heating bills. If you are eligible for a cash grant, the grant will be sent directly to your utility or fuel dealer, and the payment will be credited on your bill.

Crisis grants are available to help those who have emergency situations in which they are in danger of being without heat. Those situations include: having broken heating equipment or leaking fuel lines; lack of fuel; having utility service terminated; or being in danger of not having fuel or having service terminated. Crisis grants are sent directly to the vendor or utility.

If you have a heating emergency, or for more information about LIHEAP, call your county assistance office or the toll-free LIHEAP hotline at 1-866-857-7095.

You can apply for energy assistance directly through COMPASS, the state's health and human services benefits application site. By using COMPASS, you can apply for LIHEAP at any time, day or night, from home, a library or any location with internet access. Apply online at: [www.compass.state.pa.us](http://www.compass.state.pa.us)

Below are the income guidelines for acceptance into the program:

Household Size	Maximum Income (before taxes)
1	\$17,820
2	\$24,030
3	\$30,240
4	\$36,450
5	\$42,660
6	\$48,870
7	\$55,095
Add \$6,240 for each additional member of the household	

**Deadline to apply for Youth Tour nears**

High school juniors interested in competing for a chance to win an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C., this summer have until Friday, Feb. 24, to submit an application and video or essay.

The 2017 Rural Electric Youth Tour, a six-day sightseeing excursion to the nation's capital that mixes fun and education, will take place June 11-16.

Coordinated annually by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association since 1964, Youth Tour is expected to draw more than 1,700 students to Washington, D.C., this summer. While there, students have the opportunity to explore the capital's historic sites, visit the Smithsonian, make friends with Youth Tour students from throughout the United States, meet with federal legislators and learn about electric cooperatives and the cooperative movement.

Youth Tour is open to all high school juniors whose parents or legal guardians are members of Claverack. Complete contest rules and online application form can be accessed by visiting the Claverack website, [www.claverack.com](http://www.claverack.com), and clicking on the Youth Tour quick link button on the left side of our homepage.

For addition information, contact Claverack's Youth Tour coordinator, Karen Evangelisti, by email at [karene@ctcenterprises.org](mailto:karene@ctcenterprises.org) or by calling 570-268-1332.

