

# Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 



One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

Tri-County REC  
22 North Main Street • P.O. Box 526  
Mansfield, PA 16933  
Mansfield — 570/662-2175  
Coudersport — 814/274-8740  
Web site:  
www.tri-countyrec.com  
E-mail:  
trico@tri-countyrec.com  
For Emergencies Call:  
1-800-343-2559

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**OFFICE HOURS**

Monday through Friday  
7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

GUEST COLUMN

## For safety, reliability the answer is clearing



by Tim McCurdy  
Manager of Contract Services

**VEGETATIVE** right-of-way maintenance is an ongoing challenge for Tri-County Electric. As we clear lines in one area, others are growing in.

Your co-op not only has the right to maintain its rights-of-way, but also the responsibility to do so. In order to provide reliable electric service and prevent potentially hazardous conditions, we must keep our lines clear of tree limbs and

other vegetation. Trees that grow into and make contact with electric lines can become energized and provide a path for electricity to flow to the ground.

Tri-County provides electric service to more than 18,000 members in one of the most scenic areas of the state. Our system consists of 22 substations and metering points spread out across seven counties in Pennsylvania. A lot of our territory is rugged, remote, and heavily forested. With over 3,000 miles of electric line strung across this mountainous, forested terrain, it's no surprise that trees are a major cause of power outages in Tri-County's service area. Keeping our rights-of-way free of vegetation helps reduce tree-related outages on our system.

As a former journeyman lineman, I spent 16 years working to maintain Tri-County's electric system to keep the power flowing to members' homes and businesses. I can tell you from personal experience that it is very frustrating for a lineman on an outage call to patrol a line that you can't see because it has become overgrown with brush and branches.

Having clear rights-of-way makes it easier for linemen to locate troublespots, and thus restore power faster. A well-maintained right-of-way also reduces the potential for costly tree damage to our electric system.


Prior to my employment with Tri-

County, I worked for a decade in the line clearance industry for Asplundh Tree Expert Co. and The Davey Tree Co. This experience gave me a broad background concerning the challenges of right-of-way maintenance. The job the workers on these tree crews perform is difficult and potentially dangerous. However, it is critical and necessary in order to ensure reliable service to our membership.

In 2006, Tri-County contracted Lewis Tree Service and Asplundh to clear all circuits out of three substations: the Sullivan sub in the Mainesburg district; Harrison Valley sub in the Westfield district; and Austin sub in the Coudersport district. Lewis and Asplundh are both long-time, professional companies that have excellent safety departments and provide employees with training and supervision. They are also available for power-restoration efforts following a major storm.

This year, we have contracted Lewis Tree Service to clear all circuits out of the of the Liberty substation in the Liberty district, as well those served by the Ulysses metering point in the Westfield and Coudersport districts. Asplundh will be working to complete right-of-way clearing efforts within the Coneville substation area in the Coudersport district. Some of the circuits served by the Coneville sub had been cleared during 2004-2005.

One of the goals of the operations department is to achieve a cyclical right-of-way maintenance program. Going forward, we plan to clear all rights-of-way in one substation area before moving on to another one. When work is finished on all circuits out of a given substation, we expect the right-of-way will remain clear from regrowth for at least seven to 10 years.

I know that right-of-way clearing can be a sensitive issue for some members, but it must be done for obvious safety and reliability reasons. Your cooperation with our right-of-way maintenance program is greatly appreciated. 

# Former Pan Am pilot lands in co-op territory

BY JEFF FETZER

**FLYING** to faraway lands, exotic locales, and landmark cities around the world was all in a day's work for Tri-County member John Cooper.

As a pilot for Pan American World Airways, John spent years crisscrossing the globe and visiting some of the most beautiful places on the planet — cities with alluring names like Rio de Janeiro, Montevideo, Buenos Aires, and Barbados.

But when retirement beckoned, John Cooper and his wife Beth landed in a place well off the radar screen of most international pilots: Cathead, Pennsylvania.

That's right Cathead, as in the noggin of a full-grown feline. Never heard of it? Well, it's a subdivision outside of Sabinsville, population 600, in northwestern Tioga County. And it's perfect for these former world travelers.

"We were looking for a low population density and low traffic," John says. "We wanted to get away from the rat race that exists in all the major cities of the East Coast."

That is just how they have found it to be in Tioga County since moving here from Columbus, N.J., in 1991.

"Life is so peaceful here and not so hectic," John says. "The summers and falls are just spectacular."

Despite countless excursions to foreign countries during his aviation days, first as an Air Force pilot and later flying with Pan Am, John says he never had any desire to live outside of his native country.

"I loved Rio and Buenos Aires, but there is nothing like the U.S.A.," he says.

John spent his early childhood in the Canaan Valley of West Virginia before moving to the Washington, D.C., area while in high school. That's where he met Beth. The high-school sweethearts, members of Tri-County's Member Advisory Committee, will celebrate their 50th anniversary later this year.

Following high school, John received a bachelor's degree in agronomy from the University of Maryland. As part of his education, he participated in the



**CLASSIC COUPLE:** John and Beth Cooper of Sabinsville pose with Beth's 1960 Corvette. The couple worked together to dismantle, recondition, and fully restore the car to its original condition. It has won numerous awards on the car show circuit and is one three Corvettes the Coopers own. The other two are 1965 models, one restored and the other in the process.

ROTC program for two years and found the structure and pomp to his liking. He enlisted in the Air Force for a four-year hitch after being promised a pilot training opportunity. Fascinated by aviation since his first flight on a Piper Cub at age 16, he jumped at the chance.

Before his four-year tour ended, he signed on for another three years and was transferred to McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey. While there, he discovered that Pan Am, the major U.S. airline for international passenger service, was hiring Air Force pilots almost exclusively. John decided to make the move.

When he joined Pan Am, John worked on a Boeing 707 as the engineer, something he did for the next 18 years. He got the chance to spread his wings in 1985 when he was made a co-pilot on a Boeing 727. The change suited him as the cockpit of the 727 was almost identical to the cockpit of the C-130s he had flown in the military.

Two years later, John was promoted to co-pilot on a Boeing 747.

"The whale's a pretty complicated airplane, but very easy to fly," he says of

the 747. "It's so stable and heavy, you can't make a bad landing with it."

## Travel tales

During his entire career with Pan Am, John flew out of John F. Kennedy Airport in New York, the airline's largest base.

"In its hey day, Pan Am had no domestic routes," he says. "We went everywhere — Europe and South America, mostly, but also Australia and Asia."

His favorite destinations were in South America, particularly Montevideo in Uruguay, and Buenos Aires in Argentina.

"The food was great, the cities are beautiful and well-designed," he recalls. "It's almost European, but with a Latin attitude. It's really a laid-back way of living."

Flying to Moscow at the height of the Cold War was another story.

"I really didn't like the Russian trips," he says. "You couldn't spend their money, and nobody could speak English. Just trying to get something to eat was such a rigmorole. And we just knew the KGB was bugging us in our hotel rooms — although it was probably not true."

Flying was quite different in those



**CYCLE CHAMP:** Beth Cooper competes in an Enduro race in the late 1970s. She was named "Female Rider of the Year" by the American Motorcycle Association in 1976 and was a two-time Canadian women's enduro champion.



**RIDE ON:** John Cooper, a two-time Canadian National Champion enduro racer, maneuvers through woods road during a competition in Ithaca, N.Y., in 1987, his last year of racing competitively.

pre-9/11 days. The cockpit door usually remained open, and first-class passengers would sometimes visit the crew while in flight, offering stock tips or chatting about their trips.

John's most memorable cockpit visitor was a Hollywood screen star known for her violet eyes and many marriages: Elizabeth Taylor.

"It was the late 1960s..." John starts.

Beth rolls her eyes, interrupts, "Christmas 1967."

"We were going to Rome, and Elizabeth was married to Richard Burton at the time," John continues. "Richard had drunk a quart of Scotch and was absolutely unconscious. So the captain asked if Elizabeth would like to come to the cockpit."

She entered the cockpit and sat in the jump seat, which was an extra pilot seat located just behind the engineer's seat — where John was sitting.

"I had to turn around in my seat, and when I did I was knee-to-knee with her," he says with a grin.

Beth's eyes roll again. She's obviously heard about this encounter more than once.

"She was beautiful," John continues, "But she was so down to earth. She had a personal warmth that made you instantly like her."

Apparently Taylor's warmth wasn't sufficient for Mr. Burton, who was so inebriated he had to be taken off the plane on a wheelchair, John recalls.

John retired from Pan Am as a captain in 1991, about the time the company was going bankrupt in the aftermath of the Airline Deregulation Act of 1978. He spent the last two years of his career piloting a 727 to the Caribbean islands.

"I was flying to St. Thomas, San Juan, Barbados," he says. "It was probably the best flying I had in my whole career because it was all daytime. It was wonderful."

He admitted that the long flights to Europe and Asia took a toll on him over the years. He was losing his hearing and often had difficulty sleeping.

"It was an interesting way to make a living, but a hard way to live," he says. "I don't think I would do it again."

### Motorized hobbies

The Coopers' decision to make Tioga County their retirement destination came as a result of their weekend hobby: motorcycle racing. Both were accomplished riders who raced on the East Coast enduro circuit in the 1970s and 80s. One annual event, the Canyon Enduro, took place in Middlebury Center near Wellsboro.

"We'd come here for races every year and just kind of fell in love with the area," John recalls. "We decided that this

was the place we wanted to live."

Beth, the American Motorcycle Association's "Female Rider of the Year" in 1976, was a pioneer in a male-dominated sport. She won the women's class of the Canadian National Enduro Championship in 1978 and 1979, and was the first and only woman to win the East Coast Enduro Association's senior age class championship for riders — male and female — ages 40 to 50.

John was also a two-time Canadian National Champion enduro rider, winning back-to-back championships the same years as his wife. Both were in their 40s and competing against much younger riders at the time.

At 70, John Cooper no longer rides motorcycles. Nor does his Beth, whose motorcycle career was halted as a result of back surgery more than two decades ago.

The couple now spends their time restoring and showing Chevy Corvettes.

"I had owned three or four Corvettes in my younger days," John notes. "After I retired, I needed something to keep my hands busy, and it became obvious that a car might fulfill that need."

Beth's 60th birthday present was a



**CORVETTE KUDOS:** Tri-County Member Advisory Committee members John and Beth Cooper display dozens of trophies they have collected in car show competitions in recent years.

1960 ermine white Corvette that the couple purchased for \$18,000. Over the course of two years and \$40,000 later, Beth and John fully restored the car to its original condition.

"Two years ago, a guy at Carlisle offered me \$80,000 for my car," Beth says. "I told him I won't sell it. The guy says, 'You're crazy.' And I say 'I know. That's what's fun.'" 🍀

## PAiD program saves time, stamps and late-fee worries

**IF YOU ARE LOOKING** for ways to simplify your life, Tri-County's Payment Automatically Deducted (PAiD) program may be for you.

PAiD is Tri-County's automated bill-payment program. By participating, you can avoid the hassle of searching for stamps, licking envelopes, and worrying about whether your payment arrives on time.

When you participate in the PAiD program, the payment for your electric bill is automatically drafted from your checking or savings account each month. Even if you are out of town, your bill will be paid on time. You'll never have to worry about paying a late fee again.

Signing up is easy. Simply complete the form that appears below and return it to Tri-County. Make sure to check with your bank for its federal reserve routing number.

Here's what happens after you sign up:

- ▶ The first automated payment will be made the second billing period after we receive your completed form. The first month will be a trial run to verify account numbers. No money will be moved.
- ▶ You will continue to receive a monthly bill statement.
- ▶ Your bill statement will alert you to the date that your payment will be automatically withdrawn.

With Tri-County's PAiD program, paying your electric bill is simple. There are no sign-up charges or transaction fees.

To become a PAiD participant, just complete and return the coupon below — we'll do the rest. For additional information about PAiD, call us at 1-800-343-2559.

I authorize Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative to instruct my financial institution to make electric payments from the account listed below. I will notify Tri-County REC if I decide to discontinue this payment service or change banks or account numbers.

Customer Name (as it appears on your bill)

Address

City State Zip Code

Tri-County Account Number

Name of Financial Institution

Address of Financial Institution

Bank Account Number:

Checking or Savings

Bank's Federal Reserve Routing Number

Account Holder Signature Date

## Even out your payments with Budget Billing

You can avoid fluctuations in your electric bill from month to month by participating in Tri-County's Budget Billing plan.

The program allows you to level out your monthly payments throughout the year, eliminating seasonal spikes in your electric bill, as well as billing fluctuations caused by estimated meter readings or changes in your electric use.

Participants in budget billing pay the same amount each month for 11 months. The budget amount is based on the average of your electric bills for the previous year. In the 12th month of your budget billing cycle, we perform a "true-up," comparing your budgeted amount with your actual cost for the year. Your bill total in the settlement month will reflect the difference between the actual and budget amounts.

After the true-up, Tri-County reviews and adjusts your budgeted amount for the next year based on your electric use from the previous 12 months, taking into account any rate adjustments that may have been implemented.

If you are interested in setting up a budget billing plan for your account, please call the financial services department at 1-800-343-2559.

We will calculate your monthly payment amount and mail it to you, along with a sign-up form and further budget information.