Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

One of 14 electric cooperatives serving Pennsylvania and New Jersey

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Jeff Fetzer, *Local Pages Editor*

Guest Column

Pardon the interruption – all about the blinks

By Nick Berger, *Director, Engineering and Operations*

IT HAPPENS to all of us. You wake up or return home from work and see "12:00" flashing on your digital alarm clock or an appliance clock. You then have to reset every digital clock in your home that doesn't have a battery back-up. Typically, the cause of the dreaded "12:00" code was caused by a "blink" in the electric system.

While blinks can be annoying, they show the electric system is working exactly as designed. Blinks are momentary power interruptions that most often occur when a tree limb or animal comes in contact with electric lines. These momentary interruptions can occur anywhere along a power system — at the power plant, on a transmission line, or on the distribution lines that deliver electricity to your home.

A blink usually lasts less than one second and takes place when a recloser — a safety device on our system — detects a short circuit, or fault. The recloser, which acts like a self-resetting circuit breaker, instantly halts the flow of power, preventing serious and costly damage to our equipment and lengthy outages for our members and line crews.

This momentary interruption in the flow of power gives the fault a chance to clear. Our reclosing equipment will try to clear the fault up to three times — or three blinks. If the fault does not clear after the third blink, a sustained, prolonged outage occurs, requiring a line crew to be dispatched to locate and eliminate the source of the problem. In many instances, however, the fault clears, the recloser resets and a prolonged outage is avoided.

It is impossible to eliminate blinks entirely, especially since they are often caused by animals and acts of nature. But in blink-prone areas, we can often identify potential problems and remove or replace equipment to help reduce future issues.

One trouble with blinks, however, is we are not always aware they are occurring. If you experience more than an occasional blink, please contact us. We can begin monitoring the line in your area to troubleshoot the potential cause of the problem.

Meanwhile, you can reduce the frustration of blinks by purchasing digital clocks with battery backup. Blinks, however, affect all electrical equipment, not just digital clocks. Anyone who uses a computer knows the frustration of an untimely power interruption. When the power goes off, even for a second, there is a good chance the computer crashes and you will have to reboot.

I recommend installing an uninterruptible power supply (UPS) for your computer. The UPS incorporates surge suppression technology with battery backup, providing you time to save whatever you are working on and shut down your computer properly.

Even though blinks will never disappear from our electrical energy system, by working together we can minimize the effects of the interruptions and how often they occur.

Claverack REC will be closed Monday, Sept. 5, in observance of Labor Day.

Sky's the limit for Claverack ultralight enthusiast

By Jeff Fetzer

WHILE growing up on his family's Wyoming County farm, Kurt Stang spent countless hours perched on the seat of a tractor, driving around in circles, raking hay and casting an occasional envious glance skyward at the birds flying overhead.

"I had a lot of time to look up," says the Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative member, "and I always loved the birds ... always wanted to fly over these fields to see what the birds see."

That farm boy's flight of fancy came to fruition four years ago when Stang strapped into his two-stroke-powered paragliding gear, sprinted across a hay field on the farm and launched skyward.

Stang was no stranger to soaring when he joined the country's growing ranks of power paragliders in 2018. Sparked by his love of flight and older brother Lee's enthusiasm for recreational air sports, Stang began hang gliding in the early 1990s before switching over to paragliding in 2007.

The Meshoppen Township man explains that a hang glider is a triangular shaped wing with an air frame, while a paraglider is an elliptical-shaped wing with no air frame and resembles a parachute. Both require the pilot to launch from a high point, usually a mountain top or cliff, to catch air currents with the canopy.

Paramotoring pairs a paraglider wing with an engine-powered propeller, enabling the pilot to launch from any flat, open area and throttle skyward.

"When I did hang gliding and then got into paragliding, it's great, but you're flying over a mountain somewhere," Stang says. "I always wanted to fly over our land here; so once I got the motor, I could fly around the same fields that I drove — and still drive — my tractor on. It's really cool to explore the farm from a different angle."

Paramotoring also allows the pilot to fly at the altitude and direction he or she desires for as long as the engine's fuel supply allows, he says. Paragliding and hang gliding are dependent upon thermals and air currents for direction and flight duration.

POWERGLIDE: Claverack member Kurt Stang pilots his paramotor just above the tree tops near his family's farm in Wyoming County. He has traveled as high as 6,000 feet during his flights, but prefers cruising at about 500 to 600 feet above ground level.

PHOTO BY ALAYNA STANG

"Paramotoring is a unique sport," he says. "You can do low stuff, dragging your feet in the grass, or you can go up a few thousand feet and see everything. That's something you can't even do with an airplane. And it's an economical way to fly."

He says a paragliding wing costs about $3,500, and the two-stroke engine that powers the prop can be purchased for about $8,000. Add another $1,500 for 10 days to two weeks of instruction, and you're ready for liftoff.

Stang, a Tunkhannock High School graduate with a degree in aerospace

PHOTO BY GLENN QUANBECK

HIGH FLYER: Kurt Stang gets a bird's-eye view of the Endless Mountains while paragliding near Forkston Mountain.

PHOTO BY JEFF FETZER

READY FOR LIFTOFF: Paramotor enthusiast Kurt Stang gears up for a flight with his powered paraglider. The ultralight aviator says his favorite flights are along the Susquehanna River, when the water is low, as well as to the Tunkhannock Viaduct.

engineering from Penn State University, says he has always been interested in flying, though he never pursued a pilot's license necessary to fly an airplane.

For ultralights like hang gliders, paragliders and paramotors, no license is required, although flight instruction for those crafts is highly recommended, he says.

While he has not flown his hang glider in many years, Stang says he tries to paraglide from Forkston Mountain two to four times a month during the summer and flies his paramotor two to three times a week, year round, from his family's farm.

"I prefer paragliding (over hang gliding) because it's extremely portable," says Stang, an electrical engineering contractor for Proctor & Gamble. "Everything is in a backpack, so I can throw it on my back, hike up to the top of the mountain and fly. The whole kit weighs about 30 pounds."

The duration of a paraglide flight, he says, depends on thermals. If there are no thermals to carry the craft higher, a flight lasts about five minutes from takeoff until landing at the bottom of the mountain.

"If you can find lift and conditions are good, you can float around for hours," he says, noting his longest paraglider flight lasted three hours, and the longest distance he has flown was about 11 miles.

PHOTO BY JEFF FETZER

WINGING IT: Kurt Stang demonstrates "kiting" the wing of his powered paraglider. Kiting involves controlling the wing from the ground for launch and landing purposes and is considered the most difficult aspect of paramotoring.

What he does while in the air depends on atmospheric conditions, Stang says.

"If conditions are a little rough, you are really focusing on flying the glider," he says. "But if it's a beautiful evening, you can just kinda relax. I'm a religious person, so I like to pray when I am up there, too."

Stang says his favorite ultralight is the paraglider because he enjoys the challenge of piloting it to stay aloft. However, paragliding requires very specific weather conditions that limit flying opportunities, and it's difficult to navigate to pre-determined destinations.

"With the paramotor, I can fly across country," he says. "So if you want to go someplace specific, you can."

He notes his longest flight with the paramotor was 21 miles, from the family farm in Wyoming County to Standing Stone in Bradford County.

"You are only limited by how much gas you have," he says, noting his 28-horsepower engine holds about 2 gallons of fuel, which can run for about two hours.

He says the most challenging aspect of paramotoring is launching and landing, which require the ability to run a short distance with a motor strapped to your back and a large fabric wing trailing behind.

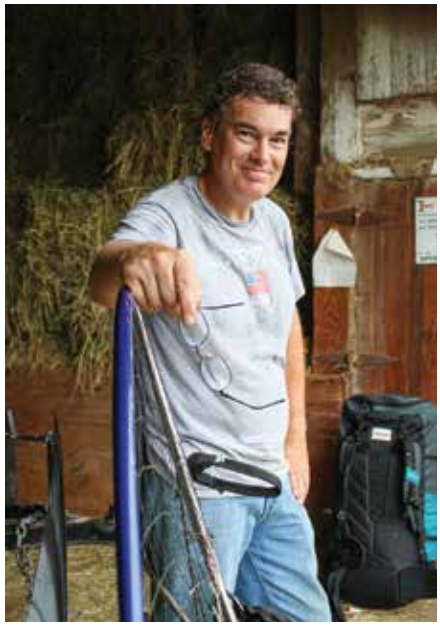

PHOTO BY JEFF FETZER

FLIGHT FAN: Claverack member Kurt Stang of Meshoppen Township rests his arm on the hoop of his paramotor at his family's farm in Wyoming County. The electrical engineer says he tries to fly his paramotor two to three times a week, typically launching from the hay fields on the farm property.

Once in the air, however, the fun begins.

"You can take your hands off the controls and just float, or you can cruise wherever you want to go," Stang says. "It's very relaxing. You get above the trees, flying along the river and the mountains, and it's really beautiful. It's just magical."

Introducing...Looking Back with Claverack

IN RECOGNITION of our 85th anniversary and Claverack's ongoing role in the history and progress of our Endless Mountains region, we are pleased to introduce a new regular feature to the pages of *Penn Lines*: Looking Back with Claverack.

Each month, we will feature a historical photograph selected from Claverack's extensive archives. We will include any information we have on hand about the photo. Occasionally, some of these old images may lack details about the people and settings captured by the camera, as well as the dates they were taken. So we'll be looking to you – our longtime co-op members – to fill in those details when you see familiar faces and places in the photos.

If you have information about the Looking Back photo you would like to share with us, please send an email to billing@claverack.com or call Brian Zeidner, director of member services, at 800-326-9799.

We also plan to feature historical photos from our collection, especially those lacking information about the subject matter, on Claverack's Facebook page. We will be asking for members' help in identifying the content of these photographs for archival purposes. We are referring to this sister project on Facebook as "Chat Back" in honor of Claverack's original monthly member newsletter, Claverack Chatter, which was published from the 1940s through the 1960s.

Claverack extends a big thank you to co-op member Gail James of Meshoppen for inspiring these projects. Gail is a local historian who has helped us catalog many photos from the early days of the cooperative, some of which she has been sharing on the "Jenningsville PA" public group on Facebook. Both Gail's grandfather, Clark Smales, and her father, Leo "Johnny" Griffith, served on the Claverack board of directors for many years.

Looking Back with Claverack

THE FIRST POLE: Claverack REC's founding fathers and board members, along with federal representatives of the Rural Electrification Administration (REA), local dignitaries and residents of the Monroeton area eager to receive electric service, gather to commemorate the setting of Claverack REC's first utility pole on April 1, 1937. The pole was erected on the Robert Scott farm along the Berwick Turnpike. The site was chosen due to its proximity to the birthplace of John Carmody, a Bradford County native who was serving as the national administrator of REA at the time of the photo. Carmody is the man standing in the bed of the truck holding a shovel. The tall man standing in the truck, far left, is Claverack's first manager, Clarence Jackway. Seated in the photo, from left, are: Ned Smith, Fred Marquardt, Harry Huslander, Louis C. Stevens, Ray Yard, Bernard Marshall, Paul Gillette and Bob Frame. Standing in front of truck, from left, are: Bill Hess, Herbert Baer, Maurice Whitlock, Louis T. Klauder, Sam Wilderick, John McCabe, William Coveney, Nate Shaffer and P.S. Rossman. Standing in truck, from left, are: Clarence Jackway, Harland Schoonover, John Doane, Jud Baily, Glen Allen, Ross H. Miller, John Carmody, Mr. Lilly, Bert Allis, Charles Mills and W.P. Wilson.