



THE PALI INFORMANT

Spring 2010

The Vidocq Society

by Gregory Pirnik

Editor's Note: When Greg and I discussed features we believed would be good for this newsletter, he suggested a regular column that would explain the various certifications, affiliations and credentials that our members hold, from the fairly recognizable CFE (Certified Fraud Examiner), to other more exotic acronyms like CPP, PCSOT or AAFS. This seemed like a great idea, so Greg began researching his first candidate: the Vidocq Society (VSM). Turns out he came away with so much interesting material on this organization that I decided to feature it on the front of this issue of the Informant, rather than as the first of a series of columns. It also seemed the only fair way to compensate him for the good stuff I had to cut from his article due to space restrictions.

Bill Fleisher was a Philadelphia policeman studying for the detective's test in the 1960s when he first encountered Eugene Francois Vidocq. The Frenchman, nearly 110 years in the grave by then, was named as the world's first modern detective in the introduction of *Modern Criminal Investigations* by Harry Soderman and John O'Connell, considered the bible among those hoping to make detective grade in the 50s and 60s. Fleisher crossed paths with the dead Frenchman again while attending the FBI Academy in 1970, when he discovered the Memoirs of Vidocq in the Quantico library.

In the years that followed Fleisher read extensively anything related to investigations and found that Vidocq continued to pop up from time to time, like those overly helpful souls that sometimes linger on the periphery of crime scenes, haunting investigators and following the progress of ongoing investigations to the point of being creepy, as if begging to be considered among the suspects. Fleisher did as any detective worth his salt would, turning his attention back to the obscure Frenchman. He looked up the Memoirs of Vidocq at his local library, but had to order it from some obscure place through the interlibrary borrowing system. He read it again and came away wishing for a way to introduce others to this fascinating yet little-known 18th Century character who contributed so much to what we do as detectives today.

Fast forward to one of the federal Mondays in the early 90s: Fleisher is having lunch at Day by Day restaurant in Philadelphia with Frank Bender and Richard Walter, two uniquely interesting characters in their own right. Bender is a sculptor and forensic artist; Walter is a psychologist and internationally known profiler, specializing in crime scene assessment. Walter worked with Bender on the John List case, featured on Americas Most Wanted in 1989. Fleisher is meeting him for the first time.

Inevitably, the three are soon talking shop, each dealing out facts from a puzzling case while the others share what they see in the cards. This goes on after lunch has been cleared away, until the dinner crowd begins rolling in and Fleisher suspects he's being cheated out of an entire federal holiday. But the conversation has been stimulating. Fleisher says he has attention deficit disorder, so for these two to keep his attention this long is saying something. Before surrendering their table, he suggests they reconvene on a regular basis, maybe even assemble a group to share a meal and look at old cases in light of new ideas in forensics and psychological profiling.

At first opportunity he penned a letter sharing the idea with two-dozen colleagues. The first organized meeting followed in a baroque room of the officers club at the Navy yard. All but two of those tapped for the meeting showed, and all in attendance were introduced to Eugene Francois Vidocq by way of a printed biography. The group adopted the name, drafted a constitution and by-laws, and decided to limit the number of members for fear of becoming politicized. Someone suggested no more than eighty two, one for each year of Vidocq's life, and the motion carried.

To get to that number each charter member passed a bullet to one additional person, allowing that person to bypass normal membership procedures. This process doubled membership quickly, and thereafter people were invited to attend meetings or were recruited in accordance with the bylaws. Within three years of reaching eighty two members, the group realized it had painted itself into an administrative corner. In response to

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Any questions, suggestions or submissions for this newsletter may be addressed to its editor, Bill Everman, by e-mail to wheverman@comcast.net, by telephone at 610-494-0635, or by mail to PO Box 2006, Aston, PA 19014. Many thanks to Greg Pirnik for his help in editing, and to former newsletter committee members Barbara Thompson and Bob Kozura for their invaluable assistance.

A Word From Our President: Ethics

When PALI was chartered and started as an association, our goals were many and varied greatly in what we were trying to set forth for our industry. We wanted to be organized, professional, educated and, above all, straightforward and ethical. In those early stages, we were able to develop some standards that we felt we wanted each and every member to abide by. As in any organization, the rules, procedures and standards you establish must be the same rules and standards you live by, and expect your fellow members to live by.

The standards we adopted now serve as the backbone of our association, and serve as a focal point for those clients interested in hiring a professional investigator to handle their case. Our standards, and our membership roster, are available on our web site. This information is accessible to your potential clients, including other investigators across the country looking to subcontract work to you. It is also used by other state associations to recommend investigators to their clients and colleagues. So it is imperative that we live up to the standards we established, and believe in as professionals.

At this point, you may be wondering why this issue has been showcased in this newsletter. There are several reasons for this, and I will touch on a few of them. Over the course of the years we have been in existence, we have had many a meeting with the legislature, and been promised many things which have failed to come about. We too made some promises, but we are still trying to maintain our good faith in what we promised. We promised, and still do *try*, to keep track of all the PI's in the Commonwealth, not just our members, but everyone from every county, and pass our findings on to the Pennsylvania State Police. We have a compliance officer, and we stated we would be open to complaints with regard to rogue PI's and security guard companies, and that we would investigate any and all complaints brought before us, and direct that complainant to the appropriate person or agency. That has become an almost daily venture.

There is rarely a week that goes by that I do not get a call or an email from someone feeling cheated by a PI, about PIs not sticking to their contracts, asking if a person is really a PI or not, wondering if someone from out of state can come here and work, or wanting to be a PI, having just graduated from "Yada Yada Tech with a degree in Private Investigations". It seems like everyone thinks they can be a PI, or thinks they've been ripped off by one. This is when the ethics and standards we claim to uphold come into play. We must judge as we would want ourselves to be judged.

When a complaint is received, we act on it, and sometimes that complaint may be lodged against a PALI member. Since it is a PALI member, the complainant usually expects us to do everything and anything we can to satisfy them, up to removing the member from our association, whether their complaint is un-founded or not.

Many times, the complainant just didn't understand the contract they signed, and think that they're being billed too much. Sometimes I think it's because too many people watched the Rockford Files! However, there are cases where rogue PIs do take advantage of clients, and I'm sorry to say it is not limited to non-members of PALI. Some of these situations, whether they are honest mistakes or intentional acts, lead to problems for the entire industry. Take for example our current PennDoT issues, pre-texting issues and questions about tracking devices, just to name a few.

Let me cut to the chase: when in doubt, call another member and ask what they would do. Feel free to contact me, and if I can't help, I will refer it to our legal department. Check the statutes; do whatever you have to do to ensure that your decision does not stick us with another piece of legislation that limits us in our industry. Maintain a good working relationship with your clients and employees and/or sub-contractors. Do not leave them in the dark or hanging in limbo with regards to a report or invoice. We've all

been left chasing that invoice that is past due, and I am sure we have all let a few invoices get past due; in this economy, it's no wonder.

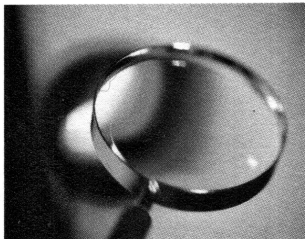
So, I would simply request that each and everyone of us, new member or charter member, find some time and read through our codes. Go to the website, and when the page opens click on the CODES icon. This is where you'll find what we are about and what we stand for. This is how we want to judge and be judged. If we all adhere to these codes, we will continue to grow, become stronger, and build more character not only as an association but as individual agencies as well.

Oh, and by the way, if you thought this past year's seminar was good, wait 'til ya see what we have in store for you this year!

May your business continue to increase each and every day, and remember: WE ARE PROFESSIONALS!

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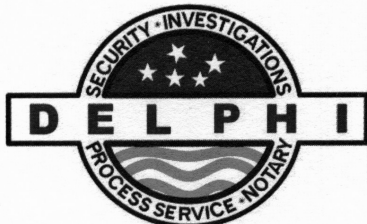
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Exposure: PALI Members In The News

Scott Shumas was on "It's Your Call with Lynn Doyle" on Comcast 8, as part of a panel discussing "Why Do Men Cheat?" The video will be available on line on Comcast's web site.

Gary DeFinis was featured on an Israeli television program for his work in an international custody kidnapping case.

Jeff Fry was featured in an article which appeared in the *Lancaster Intelligencer Journal* on March 22, reprinted below by permission:

2 to 14 years in jail for scammer Scott Powell pled guilty to taking \$84,000; preyed on elderly by Janet Kelley

The stories told in Lancaster County Court on Monday were sadly similar.

Elderly people trusted the insurance agent to manage their retirement funds and invest their savings.

And now, the \$83,947 the 11 victims gave to Scott Powell is gone.

One 79-year-old widow said she was always careful with her money, but she trusted Powell. She tearfully told the judge Monday she can barely pay her bills and will soon have to sell her home.

An 87-year-old man had to move in with his grandson after giving Powell the proceeds from the sale of his home and business to invest.

A 98-year-old woman no longer trusts anyone after learning that Powell, who was "such a nice guy," had stolen her savings.

Powell cried and apologized as he stood before President Judge Joseph Madenspacher. Ultimately he was sentenced to 2 to 14 years in state prison, plus restitution.

"They trusted me, they believed in me," Powell said, breaking into tears as he told the judge one woman "thought of me as a son. There's no excuse for what I did."

Powell's scheme was discovered in May 2008, when he made the mistake of defrauding the 98-year-old Manheim Township woman.

The woman's son, Jeff Fry, happens to be a private detective and a retired deputy inspector general — from the state

agency that investigates fraud, waste and abuse of taxpayers' money.

On Monday, Fry told Madenspacher that when he looked into his mother's \$24,000 "investment" with Powell, he immediately became suspicious.

He called banks and state agencies looking into Powell's credentials and confronted the insurance agent about his mother's money, Fry said.

His elderly mother was upset with him for pursuing his suspicions, Fry said, because she believed Powell "was such a nice guy."

Finally, Fry said he called an acquaintance, a Lancaster County detective, who called the state Attorney General's Office.

Agents searched Powell's computers, finding 11 victims from Lancaster, Dauphin, Lebanon, Cumberland and Philadelphia counties who had trusted him to invest their money.

Powell was arrested, and in December he pleaded guilty to insurance fraud and 11 counts of theft by deception.

Deputy Attorney General Gregg Shore likened Powell's actions to a "financial rape of these people."

In addition to losing their life savings, Shore said, the victims, once proud and independent, now are depressed, embarrassed and frustrated.

Defense attorney Joseph Kenneff said Powell fell into financial trouble on one investment, then tried to make it up with another and then another.

"He is ashamed and disgraced," Kenneff said. "He feels awful for what he's done."

Powell, 50, of Palmyra, said that after his arrest he lost everything, including his friends, family, home and possessions.

But Powell said he moved to Montour County, found a job and another girlfriend and has begun to rebuild his life. He said he wants to work to repay the money.

"You made horrible, horrible decisions for greedy, personal reasons," Madenspacher told Powell.

"I believe you're remorseful. I believe you have changed," Madenspacher said, "but you must be punished."

According to prosecutors, Powell was a licensed insurance agent in Pennsylvania, but he never was registered or licensed to sell securities or other investment products.

While selling legitimate insurance policies to some consumers, Powell also was marketing non-existent CDs and mutual funds.

Rather than invest consumers' money, prosecutors said, Powell took the money for his personal use.

Prosecutors said Powell met some of his victims by presenting investment programs at a senior center and a retirement community.

Fry, who once served as director of the Lancaster Crime Commission, now also educates business groups on how to prevent identity theft.

FREE

Our profession, like many others, is struggling through this difficult economic downturn. Business has improved slightly, but many of us still face economic challenges. PALI is working to assist our members and our profession in every way possible to improve your ability to make your business profitable.

PALI sponsored FREE luncheons will provide members of our profession the opportunity to meet fellow private investigators in a relaxed networking atmosphere. And the luncheons are really FREE!

All you have to do is show up on the date and time and be prepared to meet new contacts. Through the networking you will obtain new information from fellow PI's and have a one on one opportunity to provide information about you and your services.

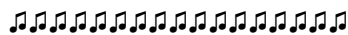
Past PALI FREE luncheons have proven to be successful, so PALI will continue to provide this opportunity to all Pennsylvania licensed investigators and security agencies.

The FREE luncheons will be held in the following counties beginning in April 2010:

Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Lancaster, Lehigh, Montgomery and Philadelphia.

PALI will be sending you information on the exact dates, times and locations.

Come join us for a FREE lunch when we come to your county. Enjoy a FREE lunch and get your name and services circulated in the PI community.



Here's more music for your ears. Mark your calendar:

Date: June 09, 2010 – Wednesday
 Location: The Inn at Reading – Reading, Pennsylvania
 Event: Pennsylvania Association of Licensed Investigators
 One day Seminar

This will be an all day Seminar beginning at 8:00am through 4:30pm.

Several speakers will be covering topics on

- ◆ Small Business Development and Business Opportunities
- ◆ GPS tracking devices. Legal or Illegal
- ◆ Computer Forensics Analysis –
 Steps to take when confronted with potential electronic evidence.
 (Servers, Cell Phones, Flash sticks, Cameras....)
- ◆ Forensic Testing - DNA, Serology, Trace Evidence, and more

The seminar will include Breakfast, Lunch, and an afternoon beverage. There will be a modest fee for this educational event. The Seminar is open to PALI members and all Pennsylvania Licensed Private Investigators.

PALI will be sending you information in the near future.

Bob Kozura

PALI Director – Region 1

Question concerning any of the above events should be directed to, Bob Kozura - Southeastern PA Investigations
 bob@pa-private-investigator.com or 610-383-0377.

Marketing to Attorneys

by Michele Harris

Are you marketing to attorneys? If not, you may be missing out on a lucrative market for your investigative services. While some lawyers use in-house investigators or assign staff – usually paralegals – with these tasks, many attorneys are eager to take advantage of your specialized skills to help their clients.

Be prepared to demonstrate to prospective attorney clients that you are both legally qualified and competent to handle cases for them. You should be able to provide proof that you're licensed, bonded and insured. You should also be prepared to provide references, so speak to some of your satisfied clients in advance to obtain their permission and make sure they are willing to offer a reference. If you haven't worked for attorneys before, perhaps you've subcontracted for another investigator who does, and who would provide you with a reference.



Why would an attorney want to hire you to conduct his or her investigations? First of all, you are – or should be – specifically trained, prepared and equipped to conduct investigations. You're the specialist. The character traits and education that make one an effective attorney are not necessarily the same as those that make a good investigator. Attorneys, like everyone else, also have limited time. If they have a busy practice, your services will be more cost-effective than conducting investigations themselves. They should also see better results from you. Again, YOU are the professional, and the specialist in your field.

You are also in a position to evaluate the evidence in their case in an unbiased fashion. When speaking with witnesses, you do not have to identify yourself as a representative of the attorney's client, though misleading a witness who wants to know who you work for is not recommended. By interviewing impartially, you may discover weaknesses in the attorney's case that cause the attorney to sever their relationship with a deceptive client, saving them time, money and potential embarrassment. The list of services attorneys seek from private investigators includes, but is not limited to, the following:

Prepare trial exhibits including maps, enlarged photos, diagrams, overlays, jury instructions, etc.

Prepare case chronology

Prepare reports and personal testimony as requested

Prepare alphabetical witness summaries with name, address, telephone numbers, and short statements of relationship to the case

Assist with large case management

Pick up and review records pursuant to subpoena duces tecum, court order or signed release

Locate, interview, research background and evaluate credibility of victims, witnesses and experts

Serve Subpoenas and prepare witnesses for trial

Transport witnesses to and from court

Take written, tape recorded or video statements from witnesses

Measure, photograph, diagram and evaluate crime, arrest, vehicles and/or accident scene

Collect evidence

Research public and court records including but not limited to: civil and criminal filings, real property, fictitious business statements, unsecured tax rolls, corporations, public filings, and other computer-related databases

Research case-specific topics

Review records and organize for use by attorney including but not limited to: medical, employment, school, probation, military, prison, etc.

Provide photographs and video of accident or crime scenes, vehicles, injured parties, and other relevant subjects

Remember, attorneys need professional private investigators to provide effective counsel. Considering the number of attorneys practicing law today, this segment of our marketplace offers a target-rich environment, so you shouldn't have to venture far from your office to find them. If you're looking for ways to boost your business in 2010, consider marketing to the lawyers in your area who have the greatest need for your services.

Michele Harris is a licensed private investigator based in Lansdale, PA.

Now Appearing on the Internet

by Bill Everman

Remember when you discovered Google? Maybe you heard about it from a friend, or read about it in a magazine. Hopefully, it wasn't a phone call from a client, saying, "Remember that guy you couldn't find? Well, I just *Googled* him..."

It's not always easy to tell which web resources may become invaluable tools for investigators, and which may end up closing shop like would-be Facebook killer Bebo. Here are a couple sites I recently encountered which you may want to add to your bag of tricks. It's up to you to decide if they're the "next new thing", or another here-today, gone-tomorrow site.

www.tineye.com is a search engine for photographs. You can enter the address of a photo on the web, or upload an image, and Tineye will search for that image, or similar images, on the internet. What makes Tineye different from photo searches in Google, Altavista or other search engines is that it searches for characteristics within the image itself, rather than key words associated with the image. While a search like this would seem to have immediate applicability for things like verifying that the guy your client met on the internet is really who he says he is, the ability to search for similar images would also make it suitable for trademark infringement investigations. Because it is new, it has only indexed a limited number of photos so far (on the internet, over a billion can still be considered limited). But should you ever have a case where you need to determine the pedigree of a digital photo, keep Tineye in mind.

www.formspring.me is a social networking site that allows users to answer both signed and anonymous questions. If a person has a Formspring account, you can go to their page and ask a question anonymously (but be careful to indicate that you want the question to be asked anonymously if you are logged onto your own Formspring account). Any questions that the recipient chooses to answer, along with their responses, are then added to their Formspring page. Formspring is becoming very popular among teens, and while I found the search function at www.formspring.me not very effective, if your subject has a Facebook page, you may find a link to their Formspring page there. Many user names consist of the first initial and last name of the user. If you are investigating a missing teenager or a criminal case involving juveniles, reading their Formspring page could be helpful in gaining insight as to their state of mind. Formspring also has the potential to allow an investigator to ask questions which would normally require pretexting, without the need for a pretext. Obviously, most subjects will not post their Social Security numbers or street addresses upon request, but questions like, "Are you friends with John Smith?" or "Do you still work at Bob's Burger Barn?" could be helpful in developing leads or locating subjects for service.



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Inductive and Deductive Reasoning for Private Investigators

by Daniel J. Benny, Ph.D., CPP, PCI, CFE, CCO

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, in his canon of novels and short stories which first appeared in 1892, gave us our most recognized example of the concepts of inductive and deductive reasoning as investigative tools in the form of a fictional detective. Sherlock Holmes made famous use of these theories, not only to solve crimes but also to build profiles of individuals based on observations of fact.

In reality, the theories of inductive and deductive reasoning have been valuable tools of the detective's trade for more than one hundred and twenty years, utilized in the investigation of traditional crimes such a robbery, theft, fraud and burglary, and extensively used in the profiling of serial killers, sexual predators, drug dealers, organized crime and – since 9/11 – terrorist organizations (Turvey, 2001).

Inductive reasoning can be defined as observing a set of characteristics based on a premise of broad generalizations and statistical analysis which leads to the development of a hypothesis. An inference is established through a set of observations leading to a generalization, known as a premise. The premise becomes an established working assumption, however it is not an automatically valid assumption (Turvey, 2001).

Also known as inductive generalization, the inductive argument or assumption investigates case related issues from the specific to the general. A conclusion is formed from observations and characteristics of a single individual or event, or the characteristics and observations of several individuals or events. Based on this information a preliminary generalization is made concluding that similar individuals or events seen or encountered in the future will exhibit the same traits or actions as the originally documented individual or event (Turvey, 2001).

For example, if we know most known terrorists are male, most are known to be from the Middle East and that most are known to be Islamic, then from these three premises we can make an inductive assumption that a terrorist attack will most likely be carried out by a Middle Eastern Islamic male.

Deductive reasoning, on the other hand, can be defined as observing a set of characteristics reasoned from a convergence of physical and behavioral actions or patterns within an event or series of events such as a crime or series of crimes. Deductive reasoning involves the argument that if the premise is true then the conclusion is also true. Within deductive reasoning the conclusions are reached through the given premises. The reasoning moves from the general to the specific when utilized by the criminal justice profession, as an offender's behaviors and or patterns are suggestive of critical offender characteristics (Turvey, 2001). Deductive reasoning includes looking at a set of offender characteristics that are reasoned by the convergence of all physical evidence in the case as well as behavioral evidence patterns within that case or series of related cases or crimes (Douglas, 1995).

As an example of deductive reasoning, if an offender disposed of a victim's body at a remote area along the coast, and SUV tire tracks were found at the disposal site, we can then operate under the premise that, if the tracks made by the tires belonged to the offender's vehicle, then he had access to the SUV and the ability or opportunity to travel to the remote area where the body was dumped.

Inductive and deductive reasoning are valuable tools for the private investigator in the investigation of all matters, from criminal to domestic. Just as Sherlock Holmes did in his day, modern detectives are still building hypotheses around sets of known facts, leading to results that are... well... *elementary*.

References:

- Douglas, J. (1995). *Mind hunter*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Inc.
Turvey, B. (2001). *Criminal profiling*. San Diego, CA: Elsevier Academic Press

Dr. Daniel J. Benny is a Private Investigator and Security Consultant from Harrisburg, PA. A former Naval Intelligence Officer and graduate of the U.S. Naval War College, he holds a Ph.D. in Criminal Justice from Capella University, and is a Certified Protection Professional, Professional Certified Investigator, Certified Fraud Examiner and Certified Confidentiality Officer.

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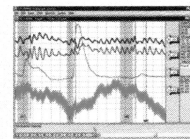
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(VIDOCQ, continued from page 1)

the growing number of qualified candidates hoping to get involved, they added a class of membership called *Member Special*. These special members enjoy the benefits of full membership – they can attend meetings, chair or serve on committees, etc – but aren't able to vote or hold office. This allowed them to grow to about one hundred thirty-five.

The Vidocq Society is a fraternal organization of both professionals and non-professionals who meet in a social setting to discuss unsolved crimes. Their mission is simple; to act as a catalyst, providing guidance to law enforcement agencies to assist in solving these crimes. They believe solving a cold case requires cooperation from the police, the victims' family, the prosecutor and the press, and they strive to get all these elements working together.

Most early referrals came from members who knew of cases or had a friend within the agency involved, but it was a chance meeting at a party that really put them on the map. Frank Bender had been chatting someone up about the group, that person turned out to be an editor for the Philadelphia Daily News, and staff writer Ron Avery was assigned to attend a meeting. Avery's article appeared in print on February 13th, 1991, clipping agencies picked up the piece, and the magazines and radio shows began to call. A 48 Hours program entitled *Hard Evidence* followed in May of 1992, covering the Vidocq Society's work on the Zoia Assur case, a Russian girl who went missing and was found dead. With the added publicity came more cases.

Fleisher turns to his computer and reads an email from a detective in Utah who presented a case at a Vidocq Society luncheon two years ago. The case involved a Brigham Young University student found in a canyon in 1974, shot several times in the buttocks and back. The detective had circumstantial evidence at the time he presented the case, but not enough to charge the suspect. Someone at the luncheon mentioned that when a body is found outside, soil samples are nor-

mally taken from beneath the body. The detective went back, confirmed that soil samples were indeed taken, and reexamined those samples in light of DNA. A small piece of tissue found in the dirt matched the suspect, a piece of evidence that pushed his case over the top. The detective was writing to say the suspect had finally changed his plea to guilty.

"I worked on this case on and off for seven years prior to filing charges, nine years now, and I'm glad to finally put it to bed," wrote the detective. "It made an old man out of me."

When asked to name the greatest obstacle the group has faced in its first nineteen years, Fleisher doesn't hesitate. "Time. Time kills these cases. Witnesses die, evidence goes missing or deteriorates, recollections fade, interest wanes, and there's not enough time to do what has to be done to solve them. Time is the biggest enemy, so we try not to waste time on our cases."

While the Vidocq Society is largely an eclectic mix of forensic experts and seasoned law enforcement professionals, some members have no prior background in law enforcement. All that's required for membership is an abiding interest in the search for truth. The group is listed with the US Department of Justice as a resource for cold case squads, and as a repository of sorts for experts, they often receive calls seeking one such authority or another, on topics ranging from handwriting, to blood splatter, to use of force, to name just a few.

Meetings were originally held at the Old City Tavern in Philadelphia, but moved about 14 years ago to The Down Town Club at 6th and Chestnut, where they've been ever since. There are nine meetings a year, on the third Thursday of each month from September through June, skipping December, July and August. Anywhere from forty-five to seventy-five members attend the luncheons. Involvement begins with an invitation to a meeting from a current member. Assuming the visitor demonstrates skills that contribute to the good of the order, they can request an application, which requires the endorsement of two full members who have known

the visitor for at least two years.

I had the privilege of attending a meeting last October. The Down Town Club occupies the top floor of the historic Public Ledger Building, an impressive Georgian Revival-style structure that has been in existence almost as long as the city.

The elevator ride to the eleventh floor is an experience in time travel, at least for a first timer like me. It's easy to imagine our forefathers walking the same hall from reception area to tap room, passing the Independence Board Room and the same sweeping view across the Delaware to Independence Hall, past the same cavernous Grand Ballroom with its thirty-five foot ceiling and elegant chandeliers. Members gather in the Bar & Grill Room amid all the trimmings of a catered formal affair; round tables clothed in white linen, surrounded by handsome wooden chairs with royal blue leather cushions.

Someone distributed a synopsis of events from the case in question. Lunch was served, and members scribbled notes in the margins between courses. Once most plates had been pushed aside, the presenting detectives

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took their place at a podium, and crime scene photos appeared on a screen along the south wall.

As it happened, the case on tap that day hit close to home for me, originating from South Whitehall Township in Lehigh County. The initial story suggested that the victim had fled her trailer after a domestic dispute with her boyfriend. She was known to associate with folks who used and distributed cocaine.

Slides were projected on the screen showing position and condition of her body when it was found. Information obtained at the time suggested her death had been an accidental overdose, but new evidence indicated otherwise. The DA's office received a five-page handwritten letter from someone who claimed to have witnessed her murder and described the events of that evening in detail.

One member, an expert in psycho-neurolinguistics who had examined a copy of the letter, offered an opinion on the mindset and intent of the person who wrote it. Richard Walter pointed out that the circumstances and condition of the body indicated this was a power-assertive crime, suggesting that more than one actor may have been involved, and the perpetrators would most likely have told others about the crime, or at least alluded to it. Bruising on the body, initially attributed to a seizure, would have occurred pre-mortem, before the body was moved, and now seemed to suggest the victim struggled against her assailants.

By meeting's end, the working theory was that the victim was murdered in retaliation for scattering a significant amount of product around her trailer during the dispute with her boyfriend. The eyewitness account confirmed that while partying that night, the victim was the only one given cocaine on a black piece of glass. Everyone else received lines on clear glass, suggesting that she may have been poisoned. The presenting detectives left that day with new insight and the same unenviable task.

The first time I heard it, I thought Vidocq was an acronym. I had no idea it was a name, let alone the name of the man credited as the world's first detective. I found that, aside from his celebrated contributions and literary embellishments that came later, his first thirty-four years were flawed at best, given entirely to his own vices. Jailed the first time at thirteen for stealing silver plates from his parents, he was in and out of jail and labeled a two-time military deserter by the age of 18, became equally adept at escaping police custody by alias or by disguise, was sentenced to 8 years hard labor for forgery by 21, and was sentenced to death in absentia while a fugitive from justice by the age of 30.

The fact is, the only time the cops weren't looking for Vidocq were those times when he was working for them. Despite the romanticized literary depiction of the man, the reality was something less charming, the word 'scoundrel' coming as close to describing him as any single word can. It seemed ironic to me then that such a man would be accepted as the namesake for such an esteemed group of experts, so before ending my interview, I had to ask one final burning question.

"Why Vidocq?"

"Redemption," Fleisher says without hesitation. "I can relate to him."

I decided to press him a bit, secure in the knowledge that even if he were to throw me out of his office, I already had enough to do my article.

"But what is it about his life that you can relate to, exactly?"

Fleisher answered my question with one of his own, asking, what's the difference between a good person and an evil person? He has met both evil and saintly people in his life, but most are just people, and most are basically good. Over forty years of dealing with criminals has left him with a basic understanding. Sometimes a good person slips and makes a mistake, sometimes a horrendous mistake, but they feel remorse and try to make amends, to redeem themselves. Others are just evil, and may do the most altruistic, wonderful thing, but go back to being an evil person. The difference is redemption. That's what he saw in Vidocq, a frail human being like everyone else, but if you look at the totality of his life, in the end you see redemption for his sins.

I left the interview realizing the error in my initial assessment. I had thought this group willing to overlook the man's checkered past for what he accomplished, when in fact it was precisely that past that made his legacy possible. For the Vidocq Society, the life of their namesake represents the transcendence of redemption.

That this long-dead Frenchman still reaches across the one hundred and fifty three years since his passing to touch lives and offer hope today seems only fitting, for while time slides by for the rest of us, it stands still for the families of victims whose names remain entombed in a cold case file, awaiting the one thing we can still give them. Redemption.



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