



Meet Brett Brubaker, Vice President and Manager at Seneca Lodge...

1. Describe Your Business:

Seneca Lodge is a multi-faceted business comprised of motels and cabins for lodging, a restaurant that serves breakfast and dinner, and a microbrewery. Seneca Lodge is owned and operated by the Brubaker family and is located right across from the south entrance to Watkins Glen State Park. "We have mostly repeat customers," Brett explained. "A lot of people come back year after year - same weekends, same rooms, same time."

2. Tell us your story:

Brett's grandfather, the founder of Seneca Lodge, moved to Watkins Glen in 1944. He had previously been a lawyer in Pennsylvania but decided he needed a lifestyle change. At that time, the property was called White City Colonies and was made up of several small cabins. Brett's grandfather built the main lodge in 1948. In the late 1960s, the next generation started building the motels. "My grandfather was very involved in the local community," Brett said. "He was president of the Chamber of Commerce in '47. He was one of the main people to help get racing to Watkins too." Brett began doing odd jobs at Seneca Lodge when he was young. He did general restaurant work when he was younger, then went to college and got a degree in engineering. "I worked a couple of small jobs with my degree and decided I didn't like the 9-5 as much as doing the family business," he said. "I took a summer off and went up to Alaska. When I came back in 1996 I decided to get involved in the family business full swing."

3. What has helped you succeed and gain experience?

"I try to think of what I would like when I go to places and have that come out when guest come to our place," Brett said. "I try to make sure they enjoy what we have. We are a more rustic setting, but we try to accommodate as much as we can. I like to make sure people are having a good time."

4. What inspires you?

Brett said he is inspired by the same things that have helped him succeed. "I just like to see people enjoying themselves when they're on vacation," he said. "We try to add new things once in a while. We added the brewery nine years ago now. We changed the menu up some a few years ago and started doing banquets again. The local people appreciate that and enjoy that we're able to accommodate them."

5. What keeps you up at night? What are your challenges?

Brett said his main challenge is trying to keep all the employees on the same page. "Being in the service industry you have to be friendly and serve the people, and that can get trying after a while," he said. "We have a shorter season than some, but ours is pretty intense when we're open. We just try to get people to always do what they're supposed to. Everyone does a great job most of the time, but it can be easy to slip."

6. What is your favorite local activity?

"I enjoy a lot of local activities. I like to think I'm pretty diverse in the things I enjoy," Brett said. "I do the gorge trail several times each year. I also enjoy the lake, and we go water skiing as much as we can in the summer time. I try to do some of the festivals when we're not working them. We try to do Glenora's Jazz Festival once a year. I go to a couple of spectator races at the track every year. I also like to come downtown and play tourist once or twice a year and visit the smaller stores and just enjoy myself."