



# Meet the Owner, Mike Stamp, Co-Owner, E.C. Cooper, Inc.

## **Describe Your Business**

E.C. Cooper Insurance Agency is a locally owned and operated full-service insurance agency located at 115 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Watkins Glen. The agency has been in continuing service since 1903. We provide everything from commercial lines to personal insurance- home, auto, and life. Along with my partner Doug Hagin and myself, our staff of seven work cohesively to serve our clients with professionalism and compassion.

## **Tell us your story:**

I am definitely tied to the local community, as I was born at the original Schuyler Hospital, which was located in downtown Montour Falls. I grew up on the west side of Seneca Lake, about 4 miles north of Watkins Glen. My parents, Bev and Monty Stamp, had a vineyard there- Lakewood Vineyards. While we also have a winery there now, while growing up it was a grape farm that required help from our entire family. It is true that the best work ethic is learned by growing up on a farm! My siblings and I also had a good balance of work and play, as our parents were supportive of outside pursuits- Little League and Boy Scouts and such. Ours is and always has been a tight-knit family.

After attending high school in Watkins Glen, I went to college- first at Alfred State then finishing at Oswego. I worked road construction and on the family farm during and shortly afterward, and realized I wanted a more permanent career. In my late 20's I met the late William (Bill) Peters- a member of the Schuyler County Hall of Fame who was the owner/president of E.C. Cooper. He offered me a job and I accepted. That was 30 years ago.

## **What has helped you succeed and gain experience?**

First and foremost have been my parents, Bev and Monty Stamp. They taught me the importance of maintaining a principled life, having a strong sense of personal ethics, and working for the good of the community as well as for yourself. It also helped that everyone in Schuyler County seemed to know them. That immediate recognition opened a lot of doors for me. I was also fortunate to have a great mentor in my boss, Bill Peters. He was a great businessman with a tremendous knowledge of the insurance business. We became good friends outside the business also. In the last 15 or so years, I have been lucky to have as my business partner Doug Hagin. Doug has brought to our business a comprehensive knowledge of commercial insurance, and complementary skills. We have a similar business philosophy, and I can't imagine working with anyone better than him for the last 15 years. Finally, the E.C. Cooper staff has been instrumental in growing and maintaining the business: without them we couldn't have the business we do today.

## **What inspires you?**

I derive my inspiration from many little pieces of a lot of people, not just one or two. Of course my parents have been a source of inspiration my entire life, and have taught me to appreciate the importance of hard work, of giving back to the community, and even of laughing and having fun each day. I have volunteered for years with the ARC of Schuyler County, and there is plenty of inspiration to be had there every day. Also, the unsung heroes in volunteer Fire Departments continue to amaze and inspire me. I have been a volunteer firefighter for 30 years, as was my father, and am awed by the amount of time and training these people put in to keeping the town protected. It must also be said that my wife, Kaye, inspires me to be a more patient person. She seems to maintain a positive attitude through almost anything, and helps me try to see both sides of a situation.

**What keeps you up at night? What are your challenges?**

Coffee keeps me up at night! Honestly, though, it's rare that anything keeps me up at night. I am that person who jumps out of bed at daybreak, and if I can go for a run or get some exercise I sleep pretty well. My challenges, however, are numerous. How can we reach new customers? How can we service our current customers better and more efficiently? Are we providing the services needed in today's changing society, such as making it easier to access our office in this digital marketplace. Lastly, how can we make E.C. Cooper an even better place to work.

**What is your favorite local activity?**

I really like the outdoors. I love being in the woods at sunrise, listening to the sounds of the animals waking up around me. I appreciate the beauty of our local surroundings. I enjoy running on the Catherine Valley Trail, and find walking in the wetlands areas around the lake fascinating. I also enjoy photography, and have invested probably way too much money in equipment so that I can photograph local sports events and nature settings.

**Is there anything else we should know about you?**

I am pretty accessible. If you have any questions or want to run something by me, just call, stop in my office, or stop me on the street. Even if you aren't a customer of E.C. Cooper, I will give you all the help I can. I do really like helping people, and derive a great sense of satisfaction knowing I have made someone's day a little better.

**E.C. Cooper, Inc. • 115 East Fourth St, Watkins Glen, NY 14891 • (607) 535-2731**

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