

Schuyler Notable: Bev Stamp of Lakewood Vineyards

By Elaine Dalrymple

READING, NY, Dec. 30 2014 -- The Stamp family and their farm, Lakewood Vineyards -- located just east of Reading Center -- are known to most Schuyler County residents. And Bev Stamp, the wife of the late Lamont (Monty) Stamp, exemplifies the vibrancy of this family, as its senior member.

She continues to work alongside her children, their spouses and grandchildren, and her generosity and positive outlook make everyone who meets her feel warm inside.

Bev was born and grew up in Olean, NY, in Cattaraugus County. She loved to play basketball at the YMCA in the local church league and she learned to sew by just watching her mother, an excellent seamstress. She doesn't remember ever getting formal lessons, but it didn't take her long to relearn the skill when her daughter, Teresa, was of 4-H age. Bev took over a club that was well known for its fun sewing activities. Teresa



is a very accomplished seamstress as well and went to National 4-H competitions several times in the "Make it Yourself with Wool" contest. But how did Bev get from Olean to Schuyler County?

Bev attended Morrisville State College, where she met Monty. According to Bev, he was her first and last blind date. Monty's parents were from Reading Center; his mother's maiden name was Lucy Hillerman. Monty's father, Frank Stamp, grew up on a dairy farm just south of Reading Center that also had a few grapevines. Frank

moved to Maryland, where he practiced dentistry for a number of years and where Monty was born.

When his back could no longer take the strain of bending over patients (before the advent of modern, adjustable dentist chairs), Frank moved back to Schuyler County in 1951 and bought the Lakewood farm. The following year he started planting grapes, cherries, and strawberries and tending the apple trees that already grew on the farm.

During their college years, Monty brought Bev to Lakewood and taught her how to drive a tractor. Bev remembers him telling her that he would not propose until she had mastered the skill. She did. In 1957 Monty permanently returned to the farm and began planting more and more grapes. He won the National Plowing Competition in 1958 on an International Harvester, specializing in contour plowing. Furrows from the moldboard plows were judged based on their lack of overlap, and row ends needed to be exactly even.

Monty and Bev were married in 1958. In the early years, Bev helped with many farm tasks, including trimming, pruning, and suckering the grapes. She and Monty raised four children -- Chris, Mike, Dave and Teresa -- while Bev remained active in the business. Other agricultural activities with which Bev was involved included Women for New York State Wine, the Grape Country Cooperative that produced "VineFresh," a pink grape juice, and marketing "Finger Lakes Finest," a frozen concentrate made from local grapes and produced by Seneca Foods.



In 2013, she was honored as one of New York State's "Women of Distinction," with state officials noting her long role as an ambassador for the wine and grape industry and her active role over the years in the Seneca Lake Wine Trail. She has also served on various viticulture conference committees.

Bev has nine grandchildren, and several are interested in pursuing viticulture or are already working in the wine business. The winery is owned and operated by the Stamp family. Chris is the winemaker and worked for the Ohio Research and Development Center (ORADC) with Ohio wineries. His wife, Liz, who works full time at the winery, also worked with ORADC (with poultry) before they came back to

the farm. Dave has always been the vineyard manager, and his new wife, Erin, a Chicago native, helps in the winery. Teresa Knapp, Bev's daughter, is a manager at the New York Wine and Grape Foundation and works at Lakewood two or three days a week. Mike is a local insurance agent whose wife, Kaye, also assists at the winery.

When asked what Bev enjoys most about their family operation, she said that she loves the beauty of the Finger Lakes region, its quiet moments and being a part of the land. She loves seeing her family make something from the soil and feels that farming instills a certain kind of imagination. She is concerned that with youth spending hours on computers versus being outside, this creative trait may be forgotten.

Bev continues to use her imagination inspiring family, friends and visitors. She is a very special part of the beauty of Schuyler County.

Photos in text:

Top: From left: Bev with her dog Presh; Teresa Knapp, Bev's daughter; Liz Stamp, daughter-in-law and wife of Chris; and Erin Stamp, daughter-in-law and wife of Dave, on the porch at Lakewood in November. Erin and Dave now have a new baby.

Bottom: Monty and Bev around 1960 with one of the early grape harvests. (*Photos provided*)

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